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LIGHT-HOUSE LIGE; or, Osceola, the Firebrand of the Everglades.

BY CAPTAIN J. F. C. ADAMS,

AUTHOR OF "BUCK BUCKRAM," "LIGHTNING JOE," "OLD ZIP'S CABIN," ETC., ETC., ETC.



"YOU'VE BEEN LOOKING ON THE WATER," SAID LIGE, A FEW MINUTES LATER; "NOW TAKE A SQUINT TOWARD
LAND AND YOU SHALL SEE WHAT YOU SHALL SEE."

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CHAPTER I.

IN THE LIGHT-HOUSE.

"The glass is turned to the south'ard, and tell me now what it shows you."

"The wide expanse of the *Mexic Sea* is spread before me; hundreds of miles of the flashing water gleam and shimmer in the setting sun, while from many a league to the westward, where the orb is sinking in the sea, stretches a long train of dazzling brightness that my eyes can scarcely look upon."

"Don't you see any ships or vessels?"

"Here and there they dot the surface in every direction, and I behold them in whatever direction I point my glass. Some are in the very verge of the horizon, where their spread of sail looks like a patch of silvery cloud against the blue sky; others are so far down the convexity that only the faintest glimpse can be caught of their canvas; and nearer still I can detect the dark hull of the merchantmen, leaving their foamy wake behind them, as they plow through the warm waters of the Gulf. It is a beautiful sight, Lige."

"Yes; I s'pose."

"Wouldn't you like to enjoy it yourself?"

"No; I thankee. I've tuk it so often that I'm used to it; but tell me, Hugh, are any of them vessels that you can see coming this way?"

The young man again pointed the telescope out to sea, and moved it slowly around the horizon, until he had made the circuit from the north, over the west and down to the south again. Then straightening himself, he replied:

"They seem to be sailing in every direction, Lige, and some are heading almost toward this point; but I can't say that any appear to be making for this light-house itself. I can hardly conceive why they should."

"Sorry! blamed if I ain't—that's all!" growled the old man, knitting his shaggy brows.

"Why do you desire that any of the vessels should come this way, Uncle Lige?"

"Cause of one should land here, you could go aboard and save your bacon."

Young Hugh Havens looked at the embrowned face of the old light-house keeper in amazement. He thought at first that it was one of his dry jokes, and the particular point of which was not apparent; but he saw from the expression of his countenance that he was in dead earnest. His lips were compressed and there was a certain gleam of the eye that proved that the old man was swayed by some deep and powerful emotion.

"I don't understand the cause for such an expression, Uncle Lige," said he; "if you are anxious to get rid of me, I'll descend the stairs now, and take myself away."

The bronzed six-footer who had charge of the light-house on this portion of the Florida coast, looked off calmly and deliberately over the vast expanse of water, as if he were mentally debating some matter of great importance, and acting as though he had not heard the last remark of his companion. The two were standing in the little room on the summit of the light-house, the keeper sitting down upon a small stool, and composedly smoking his short black pipe, while the rather prepossessing young man, who had been in the habit of spending an hour with him each day for the last week or so, was using the long telescope that belonged to the observatory, and scanning every portion of the immense field of vision that spread out before him.

"You've been looking on the water," said Lige, a few minutes later; "now take a squint toward land, and you shall see what you shall see."

Following the suggestion of the keeper, young Havens turned the muzzle of the instrument landward, and carefully scrutinized the scarcely less expansive landscape that spread out before him. His elevated position, and the magnifying glass so enlarged the area of vision, that it would have required hours for him to take in all the points of the wonderful landscape.

Such was not his purpose upon the present occasion, and after looking over the ground in a general sort of way, he withdrew his eyes from the glass, and looking toward his companion, said:

"I see, Lige, what I have often looked upon before—an endless tract of swamp and wood, with no town or hamlet in sight; here and there natural clearings and silvery streams of water, winding through this vast wilderness on its way to the sea. At great intervals over this solitude, I can make out faint, shadowy columns of smoke, that show where the treacherous Indian has his camp-fire; but these only add to the loveliness of this scene, and make our isolated position the more isolated still. I often feel, as I look out from this elevated perch, that we are like birds that have flown to the edge of this desert and are still fluttering on the border, fearful about venturing across the waste."

The practical, blunt-spoken old man looked upon young Havens with a disgusted, pitying expression.

"You're always thinking of some blamed nonsense like that, instead of keeping your mind on business like I do. Take another squint through that teles-

cope, and tell me whether you don't see nothing of a *lake*!"

"Lake? Of course I do—scarcely a mile distant—so near and so frequently seen that I deemed it unworthy of mention."

"Look mighty careful along the shore for something worth seeing."

Turning the glass in the direction indicated, Hugh Havens held it steadily pointed toward the gleaming, unruddled sheet of water, and, without moving his eye from the eye-glass, he began speaking after a moment as if to himself.

"From the pines close to the water, a heavy, murky mass of smoke sluggishly ascends, and is slowly dissipated in the sultry air above. I see nothing more."

"Don't be so sartin; foller the line of the lake, on the northern shore, and p'raps something else will meet your eye."

"Yes; you are right. I do see something else—dark moving bodies—they are canoes, being paddled along the shore of the lake."

"Exactly, and they are all full of Indians too, arn't they? I can make out that much myself, without the glass."

"Yes—now that you direct my attention to it, I can see several scores of them, and they appear to be landing close to the shore, and making their way to the camp-fire."

"That's just what they are doing, and counting what's already there, and what's comin', by the time that the sun goes down there'll be more than a hundred gathered there, as full of the devilry as they kin stick."

"Have you any idea of their purpose?" asked young Havens, still peering through the glass.

"They're a part of Osceola's band, and I shouldn't wonder if that chief was there. That's the place where they're gathering to hatch out enough devilry to last 'em a year. It won't take 'em long to do that, and then you must look out fur scalps. They're going fur 'em then mighty heavy, and you must hold on to your own."

"But I can not see that there is much chance for their doing anything extensive in that line," said Havens, turning about again to the old campaigner, who had spent so many years of his life in this dangerous locality. "The nearest fort lies forty miles to the northward, and they would feel no apprehension, if they knew that Osceola and his whole Seminole nation were coming against them. The only house that I know of is Buster Bill's on the other side of the lake. Hellves all alone, and is such an odd genius that he seems to be in no more danger from the red-skins than he is from the whites."

"That may all be," replied the keeper, who, it seemed, had been studying this matter for the past hour or two, "but Osceola is a cunning dog; he won't be likely to disturb Buster Bill; 'cause I know he's staid in his cabin more than once, and it ain't red-skins' nature—at least it ain't that red-skin's, to turn about and bite the hand that feeds it. But you see it's safe fur Osceola to call his men together, on the shores of the Haunted Lake, where no white soldier has ever yet managed to get, and where he and his chiefs can have a pow-wow without any fear of spies crawling into camp and listening. Then thar's a chance for 'em to pick up something you hain't thought on."

"What's that?" asked Havens, with a look of deep surprise. "I can not imagine what you mean."

"I'm expecting a war-steamer here, with a message for me. It is due to-night or to-morrow morning, and Osceola knows that as well as I do. He is on the look-out for it, and that's why he and his men are gathering on the shores of the lake."

"Can it be possible, Lige? It seems to me that it is a foolhardy proceeding, or intention even for him to hope to do any thing against a war-steamer. What chance has he to hope to accomplish any thing?"

"None at all, in a fair stand-up fight, but thar's no telling what treachery will do. A broadside from the steamer into Osceola's camp would blow them all to glory, ef the broadside could only be made to reach 'em; but the trouble is that by the time they could tech off the first gun, the red-skins wouldn't be thar, and then you know if the steamer didn't expect nothing in the shape of Osceola, thar's no telling what he might do. I've met Tecumseh and Osceola both, and know all about 'em both. Tecumseh was the greatest chief, and was more like a white man in a good many things, than he was like an Indian. You know there be many that say that Osceola has white blood in him; but if it's so, it hain't hurt him any. He's Injin all over and he's got twice as much cunning as Tecumseh ever dreamed of. If the war-steamer comes to shore in the night, afore I kin give 'em a hint to look out, there's no tellin' what Osceola might not manage to do."

All this time there had been a question upon the lips of the young man, which he deferred no longer.

Hugh Havens, we may as well state at this point, was one of the survivors of the crew and passengers of a vessel that had been wrecked upon the reefs a few weeks before. These reefs were about fifty miles to the southward, on the Florida coast, and the survivors were all taken away next morning by a trading vessel; all with the exception of Havens, who, furnishing himself with gun and all the necessary equipments, started northward along the coast, for the light-house, the star-like beacon of which could be seen twinkling, far to the north, in the still darkness of the night.

Being a young man, with an abundance of means, and an unlimited leisure upon his hands, he was in quest of adventure and pleasure, although warned by his companions of the great risk he ran on account of the bitter war that was then raging between the United States and the Seminoles; but this only

added the zest of actual danger to the excursion, and decided him to press forward the more determinedly.

He met with several alarming delays on the road, but succeeded, by the exercise of great care and caution, in reaching the light-house in safety, where he was hospitably received and entertained by the keeper, old Lige, who, without a solitary companion of his own, welcomed any company that might cheer him in his loneliness.

Havens had spent most of the days in hunting, and on two occasions had penetrated to the cabin of Buster Bob, on the shores of the little lake; but each time the proprietor happened to be absent, so that as yet he had failed to make his acquaintance.

The keeper showed such a genuine liking for young Havens, and pressed him so earnestly to remain a few weeks longer with him, that he could not refuse, and so it was that he felt so touched at what seemed the unfeeling wish of Uncle Lige to be rid of his presence.

But this remark, although evidently not intended to convey as much meaning as it actually did, was yet unexplained, and young Havens now put his own question:

"Are you on good terms with Osceola?"

"Not a bit of it; he hates me like p'sen."

"Then, as the danger is becoming so imminent around, tell me, Lige, what is to become of *you*?"

"Dunno," was the truthful reply, uttered in his most indifferent manner; "but I shall stick to my post."

"This light-house, I observe, is made almost entirely of wood, that has been dried and seasoned, by many years of exposure to the storms, so that it must be very combustible, and it must make your situation exposed to a danger, the very thought of which makes my head swim."

"Let her burn then," said Lige, in reply to the remark of his friend, "and the next light-house the government will l'arn to make of stum or brick, or something that won't burn."

"But, do you conceive it to be your duty to stay here at your post, almost in the face of certain death?"

"Ef I know'd this old building would be burned to ashes, to-night, I'd stay here and keep my lamps a-go'in'."

This brave sentence was uttered in no boastful manner, but with the quiet assurance of a brave man, who has fully counted the cost of a certain line of conduct, and has made up his mind as to his course of action, giving utterance to his determination, in that quiet, emphatic manner, which tells those who hear that it is only a waste of effort to argue or seek to dissuade him.

Havens was silent a moment, and looking toward the old man, with kindling eyes, he said:

"Lige, you are a hero as true and brave as ever won deathless glory upon the battle-field. More than one light-house along the war-coast has been deserted by those who held them in charge, and the government will never find fault with them for doing so, and though you may die at your station, it will not be likely to remember you for doing so. And you knowing this, only makes your heroism the more lofty."

"I expect the old thing will go," said Lige, in his impressionless way; "and like enough I'll be cotched; but thar's no reason why you should be, and as you seem to be a likely young man, that's why I'd like to have some boat come and take you off-shore out of danger."

That explained the remark made by Lige a few minutes before, and which at that time struck the young man as so rude and unfeeling. It was prompted solely by consideration and friendship for him. The feelings of Hugh underwent a complete change, the instant he comprehended the real promptings of the old man's heart. It was only after several minutes' hard swallowing that he was able to take his hand and say:

"Forgive me, Lige, for thinking you unfeeling. I shall remain by you as long as I see a prospect of accomplishing any good, but when the destruction of the light-house becomes certain, I shall get away as rapidly as I know how, provided the opportunity be given me."

"That's right," said the old man, encouragingly; "you're young, and you've got life afore ye, and somebody p'raps to live fur; but I hain't kith nor kin, and if I should happen to go out like the lamp here does once in awhile, why there'll be nobody the worse fur it."

"However, as I take it, you are not anxious to throw away your life, as you believe so much depends upon the burning of this beacon?"

"Of course not; it's no difference to me, one way or the other. I s'pose I'll go when my time comes and I don't care when the Lord app'ints that."

"Do you know," suddenly asked Hugh, brightening up, "I have a strong impulse to go out to Haunted Lake and see what Osceola is driving at?"

"Better stay away from him and keep the hair on your head," was the common sense advice of Lige.

"What do you know about Injins?"

"I made my way up the coast, and outwitted a good many Seminoles on the way, and I think I know enough to be prudent and cautious."

The light-house keeper smiled in a pitying way, as he looked at the handsome face of the young man just in the flush of youth.

"That's the way with all you city chaps; you think you've l'arned the woods and the ways of the Injins in a few hours, and you don't want any advice from older heads. You 'mind me of a chap that come out here a couple years ago, and told me that he had promised a lady-love of his the scalp of an Injin, and he started out one morning to get the scalp; but he didn't figure exactly right and the var-

mint got his instead. But I say, Hugh, turn the glass out to sea ag'in, and tell me whether you don't see nothin' new this time."

Havens did as requested, and had been occupied but a few minutes, when he suddenly exclaimed in some excitement:

"There is a steamer, and she is heading straight for the light-house. She's only a few miles distant too."

"It's the one I war expectin'!" replied Lige, advancing to the look-out. "It's crept up when we war talkin' and will be in to-night."

CHAPTER II.

"BUSTER BOB."

The individual who bore the title at the head of this chapter, was a genius in his way, well known some forty years ago throughout the peninsula of Florida, and who has his part to perform in the story we have undertaken to give our readers.

He was about five feet in height, very fleshy, and porpoise-like, round, jolly and good-natured, living in a small cabin by himself, and on good terms with Indians, whites and fugitive negroes alike. His cabin door literally had its latch-string hanging out day and night, Bob never pulling it in, and leaving it free to be entered by whoever chose so to do, whether the owner was absent or not, or whether the larder was full or empty.

Precisely where Bob came from, and what his previous history was, no one seemed to know. There was said to be a strange mystery connected with his early life, and a singular cause for his turning hermit; but beyond that nothing more was known, nor how it was that he came to cast his lot on the southern shore of the Haunted Lake, a number of years before, where he seemed to reign as contented as an English gentleman at his country seat.

The facts were that Bob had a snug little cabin on the spot mentioned, that he was a mighty hunter and fisherman, waddling through the swamps and everglades for days at times, fearing nothing from any of the human denizens that he might encounter while thus engaged, and only intent upon the object of his hunt; and, furthermore, that he sometimes disappeared from view for weeks, and a very few, if any, knew where he was gone.

Before the Seminole war assumed its bitter character, Bob's cabin on the Haunted Lake was frequently visited by men from the forts and others who were out hunting; and it will naturally be supposed that men leading such similar lives as he and Light-house Lige, and shut off so completely from association with their kind, would have been drawn mutually toward each other, and indeed have become very intimate.

But nothing of the kind took place. Bob made all welcome who came to his house, but he went after no one, and our readers have probably gained from what has been already told, that Light-house Lige was not the one to seek friendship among men. He had encountered Bob several times, and, as a matter of course, they met in the greatest comity, but that was all. The keeper of the light-house was silent, reserved, and even morose, repelling those who sought to make advances to him, and seemingly desirous of being left alone in his solitude, without disturbance of any kind.

When Hugh Havens dropped down upon him in the manner related, Lige was so cold and repellent, that the young man had no expectation of remaining over an hour in the neighborhood; but before the expiration of that time he was made to see that he had pierced the icy reserve of the old man, and had succeeded in making such a favorable impression, that he was there still.

There were some who reported rumors of the light-house keeper, years before, having lost a wife and child in a terrible storm on the Florida coast, since which time he had shunned the society of his kind, and had so thoroughly identified himself with the business of his life, that he was scarcely ever thought of except by those who were compelled to come in relation with him.

Just at the close of day, and while the two men on top of the light-house were turning their telescope inquiringly in different directions, Buster Bob was making his way through the forest toward home. He was on foot, carrying a bird over his shoulder, with which he intended to prepare himself the choicest bit of supper—but although quite a gourmand, he showed no particular hurry to reach his domicile—waddling along and puffing and blowing in his deliberate, porpoise-like way, as if he cared very little whether he reached his destination before the morrow's daylight or not.

Bob had noticed through the day that the Indians were converging toward the lake, and he suspected that a council of war, or something of that nature, was appointed to be held, upon this favorite gathering place of the Seminoles.

"Osceola can't keep quiet," muttered Bob, as he waddled along; "an Indian is never happy unless he's raising thunder. These Seminoles can make a good deal of trouble, and when they get back into the Everglades, there isn't any likelihood of their being hurt by all the soldiers that the American government can send—Hello! this looks like business!"

As Bob gave out this exclamation, he shoved his hat back from his broad forehead, and drawing his arm across his perspiring brow, looked directly across the lake, to a point about a quarter of a mile distant upon the opposite side, where the glimmer of a large camp-fire could be discerned among the trees. Numbers of forms were passing to and fro, and the canoes were either drawn up on the beach, or skirting the shore, all heading toward the same point, where it seemed that fully a hundred Indians were collected.

Buster Bob paused and looked at them a minute or two. The sun had just gone down, and in the dusky twilight the scene had a strange, weird appearance that made it particularly impressive. No noise reached the ears of the spectator, except the dip of the paddles that sounded startlingly clear and distinct through the quiet air.

"I guess I must go and call on 'em," concluded Bob, after carefully watching them for a short time. "I hain't seen Osceola there, and I know he'd feel slighted if I let him go by without paying my respects to him."

And without the slightest hesitation from the fact that these red-skins were the inveterate enemies of the whites, the rotund Bob groped around in the bushes until he found his canoe, when he entered his boat and headed straight for the camp upon the opposite side, without the preliminary caution of skirting the shore.

It was the custom of Bob to place himself far back in the stern of the canoe, which was so depressed by his weight that the bow projected upward, and the whole thing looked like the head of some sea-monster, leisurely pursuing his way across the lake. He managed his paddle with great skill, and in spite of the awkward position assumed, his progress over the glassy surface of the lake was smooth, even and uniform.

While it still seemed to be twilight, he observed that the moon was shining, and he was scarcely half-way across the sheet of water, when he saw from the excitement upon shore that he was observed.

"They needn't make such a time over my coming," he thought, as he leisurely used his paddle. "I'm a plain man and am not fond of show. If they have a good supper, or will cook my bird, and give me a good pipe of tobacco, why I won't ask them any thing more. I am sure no one is easier to suit than me."

And full of these pleasing meditations, Buster Bob kept the prow of his canoe turned toward land, and a moment later stepped out with an air of a king who has come to make a brief call upon his subjects, and started toward the camp-fire; but he had taken scarcely a half-dozen steps, when he was surrounded by fully a score of red-skins, all dancing, screeching, and brandishing their tomahawks and knives in such a threatening manner, that it was plain that they held anything but friendly intentions toward the white man who had thus dared to come boldly into a council of war, unprotected by any of his comrades.

For the first time, Bob felt something of alarm, as he comprehended the nature of these treacherous Seminoles, and he looked about him rather furtively for some face that he could recognize. All were painted in such a hideous, repulsive fashion, that they looked like the very imps of darkness themselves. They kept up their dancing, howling and swaying of their bodies, thereby working themselves into a most furious passion, that threatened every moment to show itself in a rush upon their helpless visitor and the rending of him to pieces.

Bob stood on the shore of the lake like a real Pickwick, with his hat lifted, while he bowed and smiled like one who was overwhelmed with the kindness and adulation of his admirers. At the same time he cast a look back at his canoe, to see whether, if worse came to worst, he could make a retreat to that and paddle out upon the lake; but alas! had the way been clear, it had already been pulled up on the bank, where a couple of irreverent imps were slashing it to pieces with their tomahawks.

"Confound 'em!" growled Bob, through his teeth, as he witnessed this piece of barbarism. "I would like to have your skulls on a log, and you sound asleep! wouldn't I crack 'em? I wonder if I can't slip through these red-skins without their seeing me, and then run away from them all!"

But a moment's thought told him how impossible such a thing was, when he compared his own short, fat legs with the long, sinewy limbs of the Seminoles, who were proverbial for their fleetness of foot.

But Bob began to feel seriously alarmed, as the red-skins were pressing closer and still closer each moment, and by and by one of them laid his hand upon him, no doubt with the intention either of killing, or inflicting some personal indignity upon him; but, at the instant a clear, ringing shout rose above the din and tumult, and an instant hush fell upon all.

At the same instant an Indian in the costume of a chief was seen striding among the surging crowd, like an infuriated lion that sees its mate set upon. It took but a moment or two for him to reach the mass that were wedged around the helpless visitor, when, aflame with anger, he threw the Seminoles right and left as though they were but mere children, powerless and helpless in his grasp.

Facing savagely about he called out in the Seminole tongue:

"Dogs and cowards! is that the way you treat a friend of Osceola, who comes into the camp to see him? Ye are not fit to live! Back with you! or I will split the skulls of every dog of you!"

None could mistake the face and demeanor of the Seminole chief, who ruled with an absolute sway over his subjects, and they fell back in tumultuous haste, as though they expected that the upraised tomahawk would crash upon their doomed heads.

"Do ye know who he is?" demanded the sachem.

"He is the friend of Osceola. He is Bob Buster!"

This was the name by which Osceola always addressed his friend, and when he announced the name of the man, all seemed to recognize him on the instant, and they moved away in a body toward the camp-fire, leaving him and the chieftain alone together.

"Don't mention it," said Bob, when the chief be-

gan talking in good English of the outrageous treatment he had received. "I'm such a handsome-looking man that they did not suspect who I was, and they didn't hurt me after all. I'm all right now, and we'll go down the shore of the lake toward my cabin."

Osceola urged his white friend to return to the camp-fire, eat supper and attend their council; but he judged it prudent to decline, and in turn persuaded him to make him a visit in his cabin; but the chieftain also refused, and the two continued their way along the shore of the lake, walking slowly and like two affectionate generals who have met only after a long time, and who are anxious to impart mutual, confidential schemes.

The American general, Thompson, had acted treacherously toward Osceola, some time before, seizing and putting him in irons without a shadow of justification, and the chieftain, as may be supposed, was filled with the most intense and implacable hatred toward him, and was now laying his schemes for revenge.

And as this particular incident has no special bearing upon our story, we may say that Osceola, soon after, secured his revenge. In December, 1835, General Thompson and six of his friends were shot dead by him and his men.

But just now, as he paced the sandy shore of the Haunted Lake, he was full of his schemes for greater deeds than those of mere personal revenge. He felt that with the impenetrable swamps and everglades of Florida behind him, he could defy the United States and secure his own terms. Osceola and a few of his brother chiefs had repudiated the treaty made by a few irresponsible members of their tribe, driving his hunting-knife, as is well known, clear through the parchment and the pine table upon which it rested, in the presence of the commissioners, whom he defied, and notified to their faces of his determination.

And now he was certain that the United States, with all their boasted strength and greatness, would be compelled to come to his terms at last.

"I will teach our Great Father at Washington," said he, "that Osceola is the war-chief of the Seminoles; that when his soldiers make treaties, they must not be with our warriors, but with me, and with my brother chiefs. They have not done so: Osceola defied them; they laughed to his face, and called him a coward; General Thompson put him in chains, and let him and them now learn how a Seminole remembers a wrong and how he avenges it!"

It must not be supposed from what we have said, and from the fact that Osceola seemed to make such a confidant of Buster Bob, that the latter was in the least degree inimical to the interests of his own race. It is well known that the great Seminole war-chief was very free in the expression of his intentions toward his enemies, never concealing his purposes, unless he had some ulterior purpose to gain by so doing, and had we the space and time we could give any number of incidents to prove the sincerity of Bob's friendship for the whites, he having, on more than one occasion, at the greatest personal risk, notified parties of hunters, settlers and explorers of some threatened peril from the red-skins of Florida.

Bob listened very attentively to what Osceola said, indulging in very few remarks himself, and making no attempt to dissuade him from any of his schemes, as that not only would have been useless, but would have offended the chieftain. Wherever the kind-hearted fellow interposed his good offices, he made every effort to conceal it from all, except those who were immediately concerned. It can not be supposed that Osceola thought any the less of Bob because he knew he was friendly to his own race; for it is a characteristic of all nations, whether civilized or savage, to despise him who is a traitor to his own people; but the chieftain was that cautious that he did every thing he could to keep concealed from him all those plans in which he could possibly interfere.

Buster Bob looked as innocent and guileless as a child, and the average citizen would have set him down as nothing less than stupid, and yet in doing so, make a most egregious mistake, as we shall make very speedily apparent. The moon shone bright and clear upon the lake, as the two men walked slowly along the sandy beach, the quiet repose of every thing around strangely contrasting with the frightful tumult that had reigned but a short time before. Osceola waxed eloquent as he recapitulated the wrongs of his people, and pictured the burning revenge that he was going to wreak right speedily. Waving his arms aloft, he exclaimed in thunder-tones:

"This country, from the ice and snows to the sunshiny waters, belongs to the red-man. Wahcondah made the red-man first and placed him there, and he hunted and fished and made war for many moons, until the white man came, and he gave him fire-water and told him lies, and drove him from his hunting-grounds. The red-men were cowards, and when they were told to go, they went, instead of remaining and fighting the pale-faces, and driving them back into the sea."

"They think Osceola is a coward, but he will show them he is not. The Seminoles are marshaling from every part of the South! We shall strike when they least expect it, and it shall be a blow that shall make mourning in the lodges of the pale-faces, and shall make them dread the hour when they deceived the red-men by their lies and false promises. Osceola is aroused! let the pale-faces beware, for he strikes as does the arm of Wahcondah, when the heavens are afire, and his shout rings along the mountain-tops, and splits the rocks! Let the white man tremble in his home!"

In this manner the Seminole chief raved for some time until he had reached the point on the beach

where the sand curved round in front of the cabin of Buster Bob. Here, arousing to his position, Osceola paused, declining the invitation of his white friend to enter and eat with him.

The chief tarried only long enough to give Bob repeated assurances of his friendship, and to express his sorrow that any of his warriors, through ignorance of his identity, should have dared to offer him rudeness, and then he hurried away to join the council that was ready to open further away.

Bob stood a moment and looked at the rapidly vanishing figure of the chieftain, while his thoughts seemed unusually busy. Finally he murmured:

"Osceola is a sharp 'un, but he can't close my eye, and I learned a secret which he has no idea that I suspect. He never once referred to the light-house, and yet he could not keep himself from looking at it, with a persistency which meant something. I didn't appear to notice him, and yet I am just as well satisfied, as if he told me, that the old fellow is determined to attack and burn down the light-house; and, if I ain't greatly mistaken, he intends to burn it down this very night. He is mad enough to do anything, and that being so, it's time I give Lige the hint."

CHAPTER III.

CLARA RAYMOND.

Now that it was certain that the long-expected steamer was but a few miles out to sea, and would soon be at her anchorage, Hugh Havens betrayed no little interest in her approach; for, despite his own first inclinations to the contrary, he could not but reflect that the advice of Lige was the advice of prudence, and that the true course for him was to leave upon the approaching steamer before he should become involved in danger from which he could not extricate himself.

Lige took everything as a matter of course. Without once using the glass, which his comrade was so steadily employing, he arranged his lights for the night, as the sun had gone down and it was high time that he did so. When he had ignited the oil, the burnished reflector behind it threw the rays with an intense brightness far out upon the water, and that star-like gleam of light, warning all of the treacherous coast, was seen for many a long mile out upon the Mexican Gulf, burning with a steady glow, and proving that at least here was one faithful sentinel at his post, while the blank darkness that met the eye from other points equally attested the desertion by others of their posts of duty.

The light-house stood but a short distance inland—indeed scarcely more than a dozen feet from the water at high tide, built on a slightly rising ground, where during the raging of severe storms, its base was frequently washed by the dashing waves.

Like most of the light-houses of that day, on this portion of the American coast, it was made almost entirely of wood, well constructed, and standing upon a firm foundation of solid rock, where it had defied, for a long time, the most furious storms, and the occasional sweep of the cyclone, that came up from the south, with its wild, dangerous power, and scattering the shipping before they scarcely dreamed of their danger.

Painted of almost snowy whiteness, the light-house was a conspicuous object for many miles, and it scarcely could have disappeared from its place without being missed by hundreds of mariners.

When the steamer was less than a mile from shore, and cautiously making her way inland, as if her pilot was well aware that the ground was becoming dangerous underneath him, Lige said:

"See here, you, s'pose you stay here while I row out to meet the steamer. She won't come within less than a thousand feet of shore, and I generally paddle out so as to save them from coming."

Hugh expressed his readiness to do anything that was desired of him, and told the old man to take his departure whenever he chose, while he would remain at his station, in case any accident should occur to the lamp, to prevent its being extinguished.

And without any further words, Lige started down the long spiral winding stair-case that led from the top of the light-house to the bottom, and unfastening the heavily-barred door at the bottom, he secured it again, in a way of his own, so that it could be opened neither from within nor without by any one except himself. This done, he walked on slowly to the beach, where he paused a few moments, with the waves rippling at his feet, while he watched the dark hull of the steamer, with the points of light gleaming upon it, as if they were the eyes of some great monster that was slowly swimming in toward land. In the calm and stillness of the night, he could hear distinctly the puff of the steamer, as she cautiously neared the shore, while the bright moonlight, and the lamps upon the vessel itself, enabled him to trace its course, without much trouble.

"It's some time since that old boat has been here," growled Lige, as he stood looking out at it. "I s'pose that's some money aboard of it fur me, although I hain't got much use fur it, and I dunno as it will ever help any one else. Captain Raymond is always glad to have me row out to meet him, and so I guess I'll git my boat ready."

With this he ran a small boat from the beach out into the water, and began rowing toward the steamer, which just then dropped her anchor and awaited his approach.

And Hugh Havens, left to guard the beacon light, remained at his post with no disposition to desert it, in the absence of Lige, but intensely interested in what was going on upon both sides of him. As the spy-glass was of comparatively little use in the darkness, he had laid it aside and was looking over the railing, down upon the water rippling on the

beach far below him, and out to sea, where the dark-hulled steamer was slowly groping about for her anchorage. Casting the gaze far beyond these, into the field beyond, where the sky and ocean mingled and blended in one dark, misty expanse, points of light could be distinguished here and there, where the vessels were making their way over the Gulf to their various destinations.

He saw the boat of Lige put out from shore, and watched it until it, too, blended with the gloom in which the steamer itself was scarcely visible; and then, knowing that some time must elapse before the return of his friend, Hugh moved round to the opposite side of the railing, and looked off toward Haunted Lake.

He could make out the sheet of water by the sheen and glimmer in the moonlight, and the glow of the camp-fire kindled on its northern shore.

"Lige says that Osceola is there with over a hundred of his warriors, and there can be no doubt but that they are plotting some deviltry. What it is of course no one can say. But I have not the least doubt that this light-house is doomed. It would be an easy matter for them to fire it, and it would be strange if they should not do so, while I alone am here."

The possibility of such being the case, sent a shudder of dread through the young man, as he leaned over the railing and looked down the dizzy light, into the gloom that surrounded the base of the structure upon one hand, and the rippling waves and gleaming beach upon the other.

Did he see dark, shadowy figures moving stealthily to and fro, as if seeking to avoid discovery? Was it imagination or reality that made him see a dozen Seminoles gliding back and forth from the wood like so many phantoms?

Hugh looked long and keenly, but he could not satisfy himself as to the truth of what he seemed to see; but aware how untrustworthy one's vision becomes when subject to a strain for so long a time, he inclined his ear and listened. But not the slightest sound in the way of enlightenment came to him. He heard the splash of the anchor cast overboard from the steamer, the rattling of the chain as it rapidly ran out and dropped to the bottom, the sullen, hollow roar of the ocean, and the dash of the waves upon the beach—but nothing more.

"It must have been mere fancy," he concluded, when several minutes had passed. "If an attack upon the light-house was intended, they could not avoid betraying themselves, even if they had any object in seeking to prevent it. If they mean to make an attack, we shall know it in time to do our best."

And throwing off the apprehension that had been weighing him down, he turned again his face toward the steamer.

"Helloa!" was his involuntary exclamation, the next moment. "Lige is coming back already. He has made a short call."

Such really seemed to be the case, as the figure of a boat could be dimly discerned coming from the direction of the steamer toward land. Hugh watched it until satisfied it was his friend returning to join him, when he made a survey of the Haunted Lake and its environs again. By this means he failed to notice that two persons stepped out from the boat, which was pulled up on the beach, and together entered the light-house; but it was not long before there came the sound of ascending feet up the spiral stairs, borne to the ear of the listening Havens as if by an ear-trumpet.

Hugh descended from the platform-like story upon which the light was burning into the one directly beneath, which may be classed as the "parlor" of the keeper—it being fitted up with a neatness and taste that proved that he had not forgotten the lessons of a wife or mother, taught to him years before. It was divided into a couple of compartments, which although quite small, were arranged with no little skill, so as to afford quite comfortable quarters to the occupants.

One of these rooms was a sleeping apartment, kept sacred for the favored guests who occasionally called upon the lonely old man, and thus it happened that months went by without the head of any one pressing its downy pillows. It was the same room that had been thus dedicated years before by the lost wife of Lige, and that was why he devoted it to the same purpose.

It was a strange place to locate a sleeping apartment, such a distance from the ground, and it was perhaps a curious taste that led Lige himself to locate at the top instead of the base, necessitating many laborious journeys from top to bottom; but the keeper was an eccentric man, singular in all his tastes, and instead of making his home at the base, where every thing could be arranged in the most comfortable manner, he deliberately "located" at the summit, where he remained, except when the duties of his position compelled him to come to the bottom.

Hugh Havens sat in the upper room listening to the monotonous tramp, tramp of Lige as he came steadily and slowly up the long, winding stairs.

"By gracious!" suddenly exclaimed the young man, starting up in surprise, "Lige has got some one with him!"

As he listened, he could plainly detect the footsteps of two different persons at least, as they came up the stairs. The regular, heavy tread he had learned to recognize as belonging to old Lige and no one else, but the other was much lighter and more nimble.

"He is bringing some one home with him," was the conclusion of Hugh, as the steps came nearer. "Some old acquaintance of Lige has accepted his invitation to make a call upon him. I must prepare for them."

He had scarcely time to "spruce up," as the expression goes, when there was a sharp *rap, rap* upon the door, and Hugh sprung to open it, indulging in a smile at the formality of the old man, whom he had never known to indulge in any thing of the kind before.

The door was drawn back, and there stood old Lige Pierce, his bronzed face expanded into a broad smile, and as he stepped in there followed him the handsomest, sweetest *petite* little lady that Hugh Havens had ever set eyes upon.

"Hugh, this is Clara, the darter of Captain Raymond, that has come ashore to make a call on you. Stand up like a good boy, make a purty bow, and smile jist as lovely as you know how."

It is hardly possible that any combination of circumstances could have come about that could have caused such an utterly crushing and overwhelming embarrassment to the young man as did the present occasion. Not dreaming for an instant of the possibility of a young lady making her appearance in this place, he was unprepared for such a surprise; and then her beauty, her merry, laughing eyes and manner, the outlandish introduction of Lige, and the young lady's own admirable self-possession—all these so confused the generally cool-headed Hugh, that for a few minutes he scarcely knew where he was, or what he was doing. He could feel that his face was as red as a coal, and when he rose from the chair to make his bow, he caught his foot in it, tripped, struggled desperately, and went down with a crash, at her very feet.

Old Lige was merciless.

"Don't cry, Hugh," said he, as he helped him to his feet. "Did you bump your nose? Never mind; try it again."

Poor Havens looked about to see whether there was a window in reach and large enough for him to cast himself through to the ground beneath; for surely he could never live after such an exhibition as he had just made.

But if Lige had no mercy, the young lady had, and she now came to the rescue with a genuine kindness of heart.

Stepping forward, she offered her hand to Hugh, in a frank and perfectly charming manner, and although she could not hide the merriment that sparkled in her roguish black eyes, and displayed her pearly teeth, yet she was able to say in genuine sincerity:

"It was not fair to surprise you in this manner. I am sure if uncle Lige should have brought you into my presence, in this way, I should have been as much embarrassed as you."

"But no living being could make such a fool of himself as I have done," replied our hero, with a grim smile. "A repetition of such a performance would tempt me to commit suicide by leaping out the window from very chagrin and mortification."

And then the charming lady clasped her hands in delight, and laughed so heartily and musically that Hugh began to feel more at ease and like himself.

"I have been here before," said she, "but father was hardly willing to leave me here on account of the war, but I persuaded him to let me remain until he went to Tampa and back. That will take him but a few days, and while he is safe in harbor, I hope there will come a storm—a perfectly awful one."

"It seems to me that there are few ladies who would wish to be in a light-house, like this, when a storm of any fury is raging," said Hugh.

"Oh, I love it!" exclaimed the girl, her face aglow with enthusiasm. "I shall never forget that time last autumn when I was here. It was the grandest scene I ever looked at. As far out as you could see the Gulf was lashed into foam, and the mountainous billows came rolling in to the land until the base of the light-house was surrounded, and they dashed against the foundations with a violence that made it tremble to the top."

"And you were dreadfully alarmed?" asked the young man, his heart kindling with admiration as he looked upon her radiant face.

"Was I frightened, uncle Lige?" she asked, turning to the old man, who solemnly shook his head, and said:

"Not a bit of it."

"I was not alarmed, because he told me that the structure had passed through much worse storms than that. And then it was so sublime, to go to sleep at night, with the wind howling around my couch, and the rain rattling against the sides, as if everything was going to rack and ruin in the next breath. And the moan of the ocean, and the boom of the surges, and the lightning and thunder of the black sky—oh, it is worth a journey of a thousand miles to see! And, uncle Lige, have you got my room all ready for me?"

"It has been ready and waiting for months," he answered, looking down upon her with an affectionate, fatherly expression; "it is yours so long as you will claim it."

"And for the present, that can only be for two or three days; but remember, uncle Lige that it is mine *all the time*, and I hope to come here for many years."

"All right," he returned, with another grin. "It is yours to command, and when you get married, you will come and spend a part of your honeymoon here."

Clara blushed to her temples at the jest of her old friend, but she showed no confusion in her manner, as she rattled on in her enthusiastic way:

"You needn't repeat any invitation for me to come here, for I shall come whenever I can, and I shall never marry a husband until he makes an agreement to bring me here, at least once a year. It is only now and then that father will consent to allow me to come. He sees so much of storms upon

the ocean that he can not appreciate them as I do and he thinks I am foolish to come so far, as he says, to get blown away by the wind. He declares that he expects to pick me up some time, clear out to sea, where the wind has blown me from the top of the light-house; but then I sha'n't go unless the building goes with me."

Hugh Havens sat like one charmed, forgetful of the ridiculous display he had made but a few minutes before, and forgetful, too, of the fact that he was listening and staring like a rude country boy at the beautiful lady who had come upon him like a dream of the night, and who now held his senses enchained, while she chatted and laughed, and asked questions, and answered them herself all in the same breath, overflowing with good spirits and fun, born of her natural disposition and health, and one of those pretty little black-eyed witches that take a man's heart by storm before he has time to fortify himself against attack. Such was Clara Raymond, and both Lige and Hugh would have sat there for hours, staring and listening, had the former not been suddenly aroused by the sound of some one ascending the stairs. He started up with a frightened look, and Hugh, understanding the meaning, fairly gasped:

"What can that signify? Some one is in the building. Did you leave the entrance unfastened, Lige?"

"No," he answered; "whoever has come in, has done so by learning the secret of unfastening the door—that's what's the matter."

"Then they must be Indians! let us arm ourselves!" added Hugh, in great excitement, springing up and catching his rifle.

But Lige interposed.

CHAPTER IV. A MYSTERY.

"THAT ain't anybody that you need be afraid of," said Lige; "thar's only one chap besides us that knows how to get into the light-house, and that's Buster Bob, and he's a-comin' up-stairs now."

It was an immense relief to hear this, and with a sigh of satisfaction, Hugh set down his rifle again, and looked laughingly toward Clara, whose face was slightly blanched at the sudden fear which had come upon them.

"I suppose that, in your love for the howling storm and the lashing wave, you do not include any particular admiration of the red-man, especially when he entertains an insane desire to take your life?"

"No," she replied. "I have no special liking for them, nor has father, who knows their treachery so well. He was quite unwilling that I should visit uncle Lige at this time, when the Seminoles are known to be hostile, and even my good old friend here was not especially urgent himself, from which I conclude that there is danger after all."

By this time the ascending steps were so close that the conversation ceased and all eyes were turned toward the open door. Before any form was seen, the puffing and blowing of some person was heard, and then, as was anticipated, the round, red face of Buster Bob came to view, looking like the full moon, as it comes above the horizon.

"Them stairs will be the death of me yet. Lige, you ought to have a windlass with you to pull me up when I call, and then I could roll down-stairs myself without any extra contrivance to help me— Ah! there is Miss Clara, who has called at my residence once or twice, and a young gentleman that is a stranger to me."

And bland and smiling as a summer morning, he advanced and took the little hand of the girl in his own, shaking it warmly, while she seemed no less pleased to see him, as she introduced him to Hugh Havens, who made a much more respectable figure than at his previous introduction.

Thus placed at ease, all seated themselves as well as they could in the small apartment, and Buster Bob, wiping off his perspiring forehead, assumed a serious expression, as he said:

"I can't say that I'm glad to see either of you young folks at this time. You understand what I mean, of course. It gives me great delight to sit face to face, and listen to your words; but to come to the point, you come to the light-house and make your home in it, at a time when it stands in the most imminent danger."

A look of inquiry, from all, at this remark, prompted Bob to proceed, which he did, after again mopping off his forehead.

"I'm sorry to cause you fear, and you know very well I wouldn't do it, unless I had to; but Osceola and over a hundred of his men are down by the shore of Haunted Lake, plotting the worst kind of devilry, and I'm satisfied that they mean to burn down the light-house."

"To-night?" gasped Hugh and Clara, in the same breath.

"Can't say as to the exact time, but, after making up thar minds to that, I don't think it's likely that they will wait long, and I shouldn't much wonder if they've fixed upon to-night. That's what I've come here for."

Bob then proceeded to relate what is already known to the reader, about his adventure with the Seminoles who treated him so rudely, and who doubtless would have taken his life but for the intervention of Osceola himself.

"It's my opinion," he added, "that they'll make a visit here before morning; but they may defer it and may give it up altogether, but you had all better spend to-night under my roof, where there ain't any danger of my being troubled by Seminoles, or anybody else. You can sleep there and feel safe from everything in the shape of man or animal."

Now followed quite an earnest discussion. The

invitation of Bob was for all three to remain in his cabin until the morrow, as Lige knew that his lamp, now that it was lit, would burn until extinguished in the morning by him, and he could therefore feel perfectly safe in leaving it thus; but the old keeper refused in such a point-blank manner, that no one sought to urge him more, and it became settled on the instant that he was to remain there.

But Clara, although somewhat reluctant to leave her favorite perch, where she knew that she had but a very few nights at her disposal, could not slight the advice of Lige, who counseled both her and Hugh to accept the invitation of Bob, and remain away from the light-house until the morrow, when, if all should prove well, he wanted them to put in an appearance again.

So much agreed to, there occurred a little incident at this point, apparently of little account, but which was destined to have a great influence upon what followed.

All three noticed that when Buster Bob entered the little apartment at the top of the tower, he had no gun with him, but carried a curious-looking bundle which he deposited near his chair, with great solicitude and care. It was about six feet in length, dark colored, and of the thickness of a man's arm. By merely looking at it, it was impossible to tell its nature, as it was wrapped around with paper so effectually as to conceal what was beneath.

As the three arose to take their departure, Bob made no move toward carrying this with him, seeing which, Hugh reminded him of his oversight.

"I don't want it," he replied, solemnly swaying his head. "I brought it on purpose to leave it."

"What in thunder is it?" inquired Lige, looking curiously at it.

"I can't tell you now," was the reply, in the same melancholy manner, "except to say that it is a mystery. Don't touch it—let it remain undisturbed where it is."

"It's a torpedo," said Clara, her roguishness showing itself again, "and if it happens to fall over, it will blow us all into the sea. I don't think I would fancy such a companion, uncle Lige."

"No, you are mistaken," Bob hastened to say, "there is nothing of the least dangerous character about it. It is impossible that it should be more harmless, as it can never be made to injure you in any possible way."

All three looked at the speaker in such a puzzled way, that he deemed himself obliged to add:

"Let it remain a mystery for the present. In good time you shall learn what it means. Let it sit there undisturbed until it is wanted. I brought it here on purpose as I told you, and it cost me weeks and months of labor, and it was gotten up expressly for a purpose. All I have to say is this; if either or all of you three should happen ever to be cooped in the place you're in now, by means of the light-house taking fire below, so as to cut off your escape, then go to that bundle a-sitting there, and in the top you'll find a piece of paper, and on that paper you'll see some words written. Read them and you'll learn something of the highest importance. But, it's my wish that you never lay hand on that until the light-house is on fire! You understand; that's all."

Certainly there was no misunderstanding the meaning of Bob's words, which, were the circumstances slightly different, might have passed for a joke. But there was no questioning the seriousness of the danger that hung over all, nor the earnestness of Bob, who beyond all doubt had made this journey, and this appalling ascent up the stairs, for no other purpose than to apprise his friends of their danger.

All three gave him the required promise that they would respect his wishes regarding the mystery, and then bidding Lige good-night, Bob led the way down the long, winding stairs, discoursing so continuously on the way, that they had scarcely time to propound a question. The fat little fellow talked of everything, excepting Indians, and the mysterious package he left behind him—the two subjects that just then occupied their minds, almost to the exclusion of every thing else.

He expatiated upon the beautiful natural scenery of Florida—of its groves and oranges that grew through the entire year, of its healthfulness, and the importance it was destined to assume at no distant time, as the resort of pleasure-seekers and invalids, and in the full flow of this rambling talk, they reached *terra firma*, passed outside, and Bob, by a dexterous trick, secured the massive door behind them, and they moved on in the direction of his cabin.

It was a beautiful night, the moon full and high in an unclouded sky, while the steady boom of the waves upon the beach, and the calm, quiet evening, served to add an impressive solemnity to the scene.

Moving away from the light-house the guide entered the pine woods close at hand, the two following close after him. They observed that he was following a beaten path, suggesting that Lige must occasionally make a visit to the interior of the country, even if but for a short time.

"Suppose we should meet some of these red-men on the way?" ventured Clara, when they had walked a short distance in silence. "If they meditate a visit to the light-house, are we not likely to encounter them?"

"What of it?" returned Bob, in his assuring manner; "they wouldn't say anything, perhaps, more than to pass a good-evening, and then to go on about their business."

"And why not?"

"Because you are under my charge, that's the reason."

Hugh Havens felt very much as if he would like to know how it was that Bob had such an influence among these treacherous Seminoles, but there was a

bad taste in such a proceeding that restrained him, when unexpectedly Bob himself threw a little light upon the matter.

"I suppose you wonder how it is that they don't harm me. Wal, you see when I come to this part of the world things weren't so bad between the whites and Seminoles as they be now, 'though for that matter, I must say between you and me, that the red-skins have always been a little ugly. But I saved a little pappoose one day from drowning in the lake. It belonged to a party that was camped on the other shore, and of course, when they found it out, it made them a little tender on me. And then it wa'n't long after that that I helped Osceola out of a bad scrape that he got into, and the old chap will never forget it, and I ain't afraid of any of his people."

"How came it then that they showed such a bad disposition toward you this evening?" inquired Clara.

"They were northern Seminoles, who have met here by appointment, and didn't know anything about it. I reckon they larned it though," added Bob, with a chuckle, "and they'll let me alone arter this. Hist! here comes some one now!"

The soft tramp of approaching persons was heard distinctly in front, although beneath the shadow of the trees neither Clara nor Hugh could distinguish any one.

"They're Indians!" added Bob, in a low tone. "I always find it pays to be polite, so step aside and let 'em pass, and if they ask you about your health and relatives, answer all questions in your most pleasing way."

The suggestion of Bob, as far as giving the path, was followed, and they had hardly moved to one side when a voice, gruff and growling as a bear, directly in their front, demanded in broken English:

"Who dere?"

"Bob Buster and a couple of his friends," was the prompt reply.

This evidently satisfied them, for the Indians said no more to him, although they could be heard mumbling to each other, as if in consultation, and then they moved forward again, with the grandiloquent announcement:

"We come; let the way be opened."

This was uttered in their own tongue, which Bob, understanding, replied in the same lingo:

"The way is clear; pass on to your destination."

And then three Indians stalked by in the gloom, their forms plainly visible, as they passed within arm's length of the three. Clara shrunk further back in the shadow of the wood with an instinctive dread of the dark beings of whom she had heard such wild and terrible stories; and when she was certain that they were beyond hearing, she said in a low tone to Hugh:

"It was all I could do to prevent a scream of disgust and terror, when they came so close to me. I imagined that one of them reached out his hand to touch me as he passed."

"Doubtless imagination—but such persons are not desirable ones to meet at night in a dark wood, although, as Bob declared, his protection has proved all-sufficient."

It may as well be confessed at this point that Hugh had become interested in Clara Raymond, whose beauty and loveliness were sufficient to attract the admiration of the most exacting lover. His cheek tingled with shame, as he recalled the figure he had made at their introduction; but she showed such a true lady-like sympathy, and seemed to have forgotten it so entirely, that he could not but feel grateful, and then she won upon his love so fast, that he came to look upon this walk through the woods as delightfully pleasant, although marked by such a startling incident as the meeting of the Seminoles. As their guide interposed no objection to their speaking, and kept quiet himself, they naturally fell into a most entertaining conversation, during which he learned that her father was an officer in the revenue service of the United States, and that although she addressed the light-house keeper as "Uncle Lige," yet he was no relation, but simply an old friend that her parent had known for many years. Her mother had been dead a long time, and, as she had no brothers or sisters, it may well be understood what a store of affection he placed upon her. Circumstanced as she was, she was not likely to be denied many favors which it was in his power to grant, and so it was that she was brought to see their old friend, in his eagle-like eyrie, where she had remained for days and weeks, fishing and hunting and enjoying the views, which, during the prevalence of the fearful storms that occasionally swept the coast, were grand and terrific beyond description. Naturally of a delicate constitution, it was found that these "escapades," as her parent termed them, were of extraordinary benefit to her health, and in time they established her vigor and made her strong and rugged.

"But the Haunted Lake," suddenly exclaimed Hugh, as they walked beneath the resinous pines in the soft moonlight. "I have not yet heard why it is called that. Can you tell me?"

"Why, because it is haunted," she replied, with her silvery laugh. "Have you not heard the legend connected with it? It is beautiful, and is one of its chief attractions to me."

"The peculiarity of the name struck me, when I first heard it, but I have never yet asked Lige why it was called thus. If you have the legend, pray tell it me, for the time well befits such a story."

"I got it from Bob, who says many, many moons ago, when the earth was much younger than now, a Seminole maiden was betrothed to a warrior of the Cherokees, who at the time were at deadly enmity with her tribe; that her hand was sought by one of her own bravest warriors, but she would hear nothing of his vows, and like a high-spirited girl she

persisted in meeting her true love by moonlight alone, and you can imagine the rest. The envious Seminoles smelled a rat, and they watched and waited until one delightful evening, when the lovers were taking a quiet paddle upon the lake, a couple of poisoned arrows were sent after them, and both were pierced through and through the heart, and they died in each other's arms, and that was the last of them; but now they say that at the still hour of midnight, when the moon is at its full, the canoe is seen to glide across the lake, with a white, pale-faced warrior sitting in the stern, paddle in hand, who is supposed to bear a very close resemblance, except in the way of complexion, to the Seminole brave of the olden time, who still glides over the lake, with the pale figure of the maiden lying at his feet in the bottom of the canoe; guiding his boat by the motion of his spirit paddle, until he vanishes in the mist and gloom at the opposite side of the lake. So there you have the legend, as romantic and wild as you may choose to make it. I am no novelist, so you cannot expect me to dress it up like Sir Walter Scott."

"But have you ever seen it?" inquired Hugh, not a little interested in the tradition which the girl had rattled off in her lively, piquant manner.

"No; I have made several attempts, but fate has been against me every time—a dark night, not a full moon, or something or other, was sure to happen."

"But Bob dwells on the shore of the lake, and he must know something about it," said Hugh, partly directing his remark to their guide himself.

"Of course he does," replied Clara, speaking for him; "he has seen it hundreds of times, and I suspect has a tender regard for the Indian maid herself. I have no doubt that he sits on the bank and sighs like some love-lorn swain, and perhaps attempts to serenade it. But," added the girl, in some surprise, "it looks to me as if we had hit upon the very night to see the spirits of the lake."

"So we have," said Bob, in his gruff, base voice, "and you shall both see it within the next half hour!"

CHAPTER V.

THE SPIRIT OF THE HAUNTED LAKE.

THIS announcement of Bob's roused the young couple from the gossip conversation into which they had fallen, for, simultaneous with his words, came the discovery that they were upon the margin of the Haunted Lake, the gleam and shimmer of the water being plainly seen through the trees, as it lay with surface as smooth and unrippled as that of a mirror.

Their guide walked close to the edge of the water, and they paused a few feet behind him, with their faces turned toward the beautiful scene, and their tongues awed to silence by the impressive surroundings.

Haunted Lake, as our readers have perhaps learned, was a sheet of water, perhaps a mile in length, and about half as wide, surrounded on all sides by a white, sandy beach, of crystal clearness, and great depth, its source being in the numerous springs at the bottom. Although so near the ocean, its waters were cold and fresh, preserving their limpid purity, in the long distance that its small outlet flowed through the sands, before reaching the sea. A rod or two back from the margin on every side, rose the dense pine woods, completely walling it in, and making it appear like a great diamond in an emerald setting.

Standing where our three friends did, at the western extremity, with the beach curving far outward upon the right and left, they could see, in the bright moonlight, the cabin of Bob standing on the right, a quarter of a mile distant, while directly opposite was the bright glimmer of the Seminole camp-fire, with dim, uncertain glimpses of a shadowy figure moving to and fro.

Impressed by the beautiful scene, Hugh Havens softly drew the arm of Clara within his own, and they stood for several minutes, contemplating the matchless picture.

"Wouldn't that 'ere make a nice reservoir for some country town?"

The question came from Buster Bob, as he turned suddenly around and faced his startled companions, who were completely disenchanted by the very practical character of the remark.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," replied the indignant Clara, "and I have a great mind to box your ears. There isn't a particle of romance in your make, or surely it would show itself now."

"Yes, there is too," persisted Bob, as he moved along the beach; "wait till I show you the spook; that's what knocks the spots out of me, and makes me as romantic as a pig on ice."

"I should think so," was the comment of Clara, as the two followed after him. "You remind me of just such an animal."

"The best place to see the ghost is in front of my mansion, and then we can make a good supper before we get romantic."

They walked a short distance along the beach without speaking, and then Hugh called to Bob:

"There is one thing that gives Miss Raymond and myself no little anxiety."

"I s'pose it's about the supper; don't fret yourselves. I've got enough for both of you."

"It isn't that, but it is about those three Indians that we met in the wood."

"I've enough for them, too, if they give us a call; so get your minds at rest there too."

"Not that; but they were going toward the light-house, you know. What could have been their errand?"

Bob became sobered on the instant, and spoke, seriously:

"You mustn't think I forgot them, for I didn't.

They're going toward the light-house, of course, and they will take a good look at it."

"Will they not disturb it? Do you think it will be fired to-night? What other errand could have taken them there?"

"That's hard to tell; I hope not, 'cause if they don't, there's a good chance of its escaping altogether."

"How so?" inquired Hugh, showing his eager interest, both in his words and manner.

"Osceola is planning an expedition northward. They will arrange and settle every thing to-night, and if they let Lige alone until morning, I am in hopes that they won't take time to bother and delay with such a little matter as the burning of the light-house would be. Still, understand, I say I hope that, and ain't sartin by any means."

"Was Osceola one of the three whom we met?" continued our hero.

"No; he would have stopped to speak with me, if he was. But they were a part of his band."

"Is the Seminole chieftain bitter in his enmity toward the whites?"

"You can bet on that. He's going, or rather he has gone, into this business to do or die. Of course he will die, as every man must in the end, but he'll make trouble before he does."

"I believe I haven't told you," said Clara, in a low voice, "that I am acquainted with Osceola?"

"No," said Hugh, in amazement; "you astonish me. Did he cut as pretty a figure as I, when he was introduced?"

"Hardly, although he might have done so, had not the circumstances been so different. I was fishing on the lake one day, very near this spot, and when I grew tired, I paddled ashore, and stepped out, when who should stalk out of the woods, but a big Indian, and walking directly up to me, thrust out his hand, and said in good English, 'How do you do, sister?'"

"It must have alarmed you?"

"It did at first, but I knew, almost at the first moment, that it was the great Seminole. He was tall and fine-looking, and dressed beautifully, that is for an Indian—and then I knew that Bob was expecting a visit from him. He acted like a gentleman, I must say, and walked beside me to Bob's cottage, amusing me not a little by his peculiar manner of speech. He called me the Magnolia of the Forest, and became so complimentary and poetical, that I am sure I was quite embarrassed."

"And did he leave you, with a pleasant good-day, at the door?" laughed Hugh, not a little interested in what he had heard.

"Not at all; he entered the cabin with me, where Bob made a great ado over him, and I was compelled to sit at the table and dine with him. But he was so pointed in his attentions, that I felt compelled to return to the light-house, where I knew I was safe from further interruption, and I saw him no more."

"But I suppose he hung around for a long time, in the hope of seeing you again."

"If so, he was disappointed, for when I made Bob another call, a few days after, he was gone."

"But I tell you he was smit," put in Bob, with a laugh. "He did stay with me for two days, and he didn't do much else but look toward the light-house and sigh and ask me when the Magnolia of the Forest would bloom in my wigwam again, and you know, Clara, that he sent me after you once, but you wouldn't come, and when he went away, if there was ever such a thing as an Indian with a broken heart, Osceola was that same Indian—but here we are at the mansion."

The cabin of Bob was a very ordinary one in structure, scarcely meriting any particular description. He entered it by merely pulling the latch-string, and in a few seconds, by aid of his flint and tinder, had a tallow candle lighted, and shortly after he produced some well-cooked meat, which our young friends needed no urging to attack.

But their minds were full of the Spirit of the Haunted Lake, and it was not long before they passed out upon the beach again, where all three seated themselves upon a fallen log and looked out upon the beautiful sheet of water.

"This is about time the spook put in an appearance," said Bob, and immediately added, "there it comes, too!"

Looking toward the right extremity of the lake, neither Clara nor Hugh, at first sight, saw any thing unusual, but the next moment plainly perceived the figure of a canoe, slowly coming forth from the gloom at the eastern extremity, and passing along over the lake, as if it were about to keep near the middle for the entire distance.

In the stern of the boat sat a form in white, apparently as motionless as a statue, until it came somewhat nearer, when it was seen to be using the paddle, with a soft, wavy, noiseless motion, that gave it an airy progress, in perfect consonance with its spirit character, and that produced no ripple upon the water.

Only the single figure was visible, Bob having explained that the stricken maiden lying prostrate in the canoe, could only be seen when the boat was close to land, or one was near it; but as the course of the boat brought it nearer and nearer, there was a distinctness about it and the occupant that was absolutely startling.

The canoe was white, and the warrior seated in the stern with his face immovably fixed upon what was ahead of him, seemed to be of that light, immaterial character, which makes up our imaginings of the denizens of the other world. It was the very embodiment indeed of the legend just told by Clara.

Hugh Havens was as little subject to superstition as one could possibly be, and he rubbed his eyes again and again and stared at the apparition; but

there was no "rubbin' it out." There it was, just as distinctly outlined as was the form of the beautiful girl beside him.

And she saw it, too, as he well knew from her hushed, awed manner. Her gaze was fixed upon it, as it slowly glided before her, and she refrained from speaking or moving lest by so doing, she might break the spell and dissipate the vision forever.

Hugh became curious to observe the effect of this apparition upon the Seminoles, for it seemed hardly possible that they should fail to note it, and their superstitious nature must cause it to produce a profound impression upon them.

The Indian camp-fire was directly opposite, and, as we have said, figures had been seen moving about all the evening. No excitement or outcry told whether they had discovered the spirit canoe; but when he looked in that direction, not one of them could be seen. It looked as if the council were ended and they had fled, but Hugh rightly suspected that, having seen the wonderful vision they had given heels to their terror, and scattered like a flash to the forest, too frightened, perhaps, to return again, so long as the spirit canoe was visible.

A half-hour from the time the canoe was first seen at the eastern extremity of the Haunted Lake, it had reached the western end, and while the eyes of all three were fastened upon it, gradually blended with the shadow at the opposite point, and vanished from view altogether, its coming and going having been in perfect consonance with its strange, mythical nature—not the lightest sound marking its passage over the lake.

Clara Raymond uttered a slight sigh, and turning to her companion, said:

"Well, we have seen it, and what do you think of the Spirit Canoe? Does it meet your conception of it?"

"Yes; I must say that it does. It is strange, and wonderful. I have heard of such things before, but I never saw any thing like it until now. It accords with the legend you told me, and one who has seen it can never forget it."

It was now the turn of Bob to speak, and facing his solemn countenance toward them, he raised his hand in his most impressive manner, like one who is about to unburden his soul.

"I tell you what it is; I've seen that thing before, and it always seemed to me that it sets kind o' lopsided in the canoe, and it ought to have another spirit to boost it up straight. I wonder ef that old warrior was not top-heavy or lopsided in some way or other. That's the question that agitates my bosom."

And he threw up one foot over the other, and folding his arms, stared at the two, with an owl's expression, as if he expected them to dispute the assertion which he was prepared to maintain.

But no one disputed him. Neither felt particularly in the mood, as they were willing that Bob should enjoy his opinion unmolested as far as they were concerned.

However, they discovered, much to their surprise, that there was a vein of romance, after all, in the composition of Buster Bob, the only difficulty being that it took some skill to bring it out. He told them of his first meeting with the haunting vision, some years before, when he was fishing by moonlight at one corner of the lake, and how he lay down in the bottom of the canoe, and never took his eyes from it until it disappeared in the darkness, and then he watched the whole night through in the expectation of seeing it come back again.

But it did not, and weeks passed before he was permitted to look upon the vision, and in the mean time he learned from Osceola the legend connected with it, and told it to Clara, who had made many efforts to catch a glimpse of it, but had never succeeded until now.

Seeing it so often, Bob came to look upon it as an old acquaintance, and he had sat in his canoe, and never once stopped his fishing while it passed within a hundred yards of him.

"I once sung out to him, when he was close by, and axed him to go ashore and take a lunch."

"With what result?" asked the horrified Clara.

"None at all; the blamed critter was too unmannerly even to thank me."

"But you know that spirits are not material enough to eat."

"I dunno about that," replied Bob, with a laugh.

"Osceola sometimes speaks of you as a *spirit*, and I don't believe that he has any idea that you live on air. Howsumever, I thought the warrior might have thanked me for my invite, by a nod of the head, or wave of the hand; but he didn't do neither, and I didn't invite him again. See here!" suddenly exclaimed Bob, with one of his abrupt changes of manner. "I s'pose you folks will set out here for an hour or two, won't you?"

Hugh looked to his fair companion for a reply, and she said:

"The night is so pleasant and the scene so enchanting that I cannot help enjoying it. How is it, Mr. Havens?"

"Any place would be delightful to me, were I but assured of your company. So you may consider it settled, Bob."

"The reason I axed you was that I have—a little—business or errand—off some distance, and I would like to see that it is attended to before the sun comes up to-morrow."

And he rose in an awkward sort of a way, and stretched himself, as if embarrassed to offer a suitable explanation.

"I don't see any need of your waiting then, if your business is of such importance," said Clara.

"I don't either," he added, as if suddenly recollecting himself. "What am I hanging about here for?"

And he started up the beach at a rapid walk, halting when he had gone a short distance, when he drew out and launched a sort of dug-out. Bob had these boats, seemingly, everywhere, and he could hardly go astray, when he wished to make a trip over the lake.

It required but a few minutes for him to launch the boat, when, taking his seat in it, he began using the paddle with the skill of the most accomplished veteran.

"He is heading directly toward the Indian camp," said Hugh, in considerable surprise.

"Doubtless he has some errand there. You know he is a singular, privileged character, who seems to have a license to go where and to go when he chooses, without fear of disturbance. It may be that he is seeking an interview with Osceola. If it is so, I hope he has consideration enough for me, not to mention my presence here."

"But see! Bob is changing his course. He is turning his canoe back again."

Such was the case indeed. A few strokes of the paddle faced the dug-out square about, and the occupant headed straight toward the beach at their feet.

His manner indicated that he wished to say something of importance to them, and they rose to their feet to hear him. He checked his boat, when about a dozen yards away, and said in a cautious undertone:

"I forgot to tell you, that if you get hungry you will find plenty to eat on the table in the back part of the mansion. Don't be afraid of taking all you want. *Au revoir.*"

"There is his romantic imagination again," laughed Clara, as he turned about and rowed rapidly out of sight.

Until long after midnight, the lovers (as we may well call them) sat upon the beach of Haunted Lake, in sweet converse, and when Bob returned he came through the woods and appeared to be troubled about something. He said little and speedily ushered his friends to their respective quarters for the night.

CHAPTER VI. OSCEOLA.

HUGH HAVENS was the first one to awake in the cabin, and when he passed out to the margin of the lake, his first look was toward the light, to see whether it had been disturbed during the night.

"Thank God!" was his fervent ejaculation, as he saw the tall, conical structure, gleaming white against the blue sky beyond. "The great danger I trust is passed, and Old Lige shall be spared for many a year to trim and keep his lamps burning, high up in the air of Heaven."

Walking down to the lake, he bathed his face and hands in the clear cold waters, and then walked slowly along the beach, finally pausing to contemplate the opposite shore, where he had seen the glimmer of the camp-fire on the night previous. All was quiet and still, and not a solitary figure was to be seen. He was strongly tempted to take the canoe of Bob, and paddle to the other shore for a personal inspection of the camp; but prudence whispered to him that there was too much risk in doing so. If the cabin and presence of Bob were sufficient to protect him from personal disturbance, yet it would be rash to presume upon his friendship, and if he should happen to encounter a few prowling red-skins near the deserted camp, the results were likely to be exceedingly disagreeable to say the least. So he wisely remained where he was.

"It looks as if what Bob and we all so earnestly desired has come about. The Spirit of the Lake has frightened them away, and they have gone northward on their expedition against the whites. Heaven send that such may be the case."

Still there was a vague misgiving, for which he could not account, and which oppressed him greatly. It seemed to him as if the day that had just commenced was to be one fraught with important events which in some way were to affect his fortunes for evil or good.

And then very naturally his thoughts reverted to the lady whom he had met upon the previous evening, and whom he had accompanied to the Haunted Lake.

"How singular, that we who had never seen or heard of each other, and coming from points hundreds of miles apart, should have met here upon the coast of Florida, in the look-out of a light-house, and then should wander away to this mysterious sheet of water. If there can be such a thing as love at first sight, I am sure that I love her—and that, too, as deeply and truly as man can love woman."

He started and gazed furtively about him, as if fearful that some one had overheard his words, which sent such new and delightful emotions through his heart, and learned his sweet secret. Then his face turned crimson, as he recalled that performance of his at the introduction.

"Can she ever think of me with any other feelings except those of pity and contempt? The memory of that ridiculous display will make me blush fifty years from now, should I be spared to see that time. And yet it does seem to make no difference in her estimation of me. A woman's heart is a puzzle, but that she is a lady is beyond all question—handsome, intelligent, amiable and everything that goes to make her sex so precious in our eyes. There is something romantic in the thought of love in a light-house."

And indulging in these pleasant reflections, and building all manner of air-castles, Hugh sauntered down the beach in the direction of the cabin, forgetting all about the fears that had disturbed his thoughts, and forgetful too of that strange apparition of the spirit warrior that had crossed his path,

and that had done so much to shake his belief in ghosts and hobgoblins. He dreamed only of Clara Raymond, the beautiful enchanting Magnolia of the Forest; fragrant in his thoughts is that most fragrant of all shrubs, and destined to be a joy forever to him. Leaving the present, he pictured all manner of roseate dreams of the future, when fortune should permit him to catch this bird and place it in his own cage.

And full of these sweet day-dreams he sauntered back to the cabin of Bob, where he found his two friends were awaiting him.

Bob had already made an observation, and finding the light-house undisturbed, was in high hopes, although he declared, he had received assurances on the evening previous that it would not be harmed. Upon his saying this, Clara questioned him rather sharply; but he showed such an indisposition to answer her inquiries, that she ceased, and no further reference was made to the subject at this time.

When breakfast was finished, Bob made an excuse for taking Hugh out of hearing of the lady, and he asked rather abruptly:

"Have you made any arrangements as to how you and the lady in there are going to spend the day?"

"I can't say that I have," replied the young man, somewhat taken aback by the abruptness of the question. "Of course I place myself at her disposal. I suppose she has no wish to wander very far away from your cabin, while the Seminoles are in the neighborhood. She is quite fond of hunting and fishing, and I presume may wish to take a row upon the lake, if you consider it safe."

"You haven't made any arrangement then with her?"

"None at all."

"I'm blamed glad to hear that, for I am going to ask a particular favor of you."

"Any thing that I can do to oblige you, I shall only be too happy to do," was the instant and honest response of Hugh.

"Very well then; I want you to go to the light-house to see Lige, and stay away from Clara till to-morrow morning."

Naturally enough Hugh Havens was amazed at this request, and, although he forbore asking any questions, his looks betrayed his curiosity so plainly, that Bob hastened to add:

"No doubt, you and Clara and Lige think me a queer chap, and I s'pose I am; but I have a reason for asking this, and you shall learn what it is some day. Do you promise to comply with my request?"

"I do," replied Hugh. "I will make some excuse to the lady for absenting myself to-day, and I pledge you that I shall not present myself at your cabin between now and the rising of to-morrow's sun. Is that sufficient?"

Bob stood a moment as if debating some question with himself. Two or three times he seemed to be on the point of saying something. Well would it have been for all had he done so; but he refrained, and thanking his young friend for his prompt compliance with his request, he told him to go inside and settle it with Clara, while he attended to some matters for himself.

Hugh managed the matter without difficulty. The acquaintance of the two was so brief, that had the lady felt any disappointment, she had too much good taste to express it. She said she would probably remain with Bob for a couple of days, unless a storm should come up, when of course she would hasten to her eyrie to enjoy the grand scene. She added that she would be glad to see him at any time, when he could make it convenient, but she had no wish to interfere with any business that he had upon his hands.

And, bidding her a pleasant good-day, Hugh passed out of the cabin, and made his way to the light-house.

Bob waited until he was beyond sight and hearing, and then approached Clara.

"Well, Magnolia, what is it to-day, fish or hunt? You know I have all that you need at your disposal."

"I did intend to ask Mr. Havens to accompany me on a hunt through the woods, but as he can not go with me, I think I shall have to give that up, unless you will act as my escort."

"Sorry, but I shall have to leave you alone till evening," replied Bob, with some little embarrassment of manner.

"Then I will not go alone, as I have no wish to meet any of the Seminoles wandering in the woods."

"You needn't be afraid of that," Bob hastened to say, "the whole war-party left last night, and are a long ways off by this time."

"I am glad to hear that, but, on the whole, I will defer my hunting business until the Indians have had time to get a little further off. If you think it is safe, I will take one of your canoes, and paddle to the upper end of the lake, where you know there is a capital spot to fish. I will stay there until I catch enough for dinner, and then come home. But tell me, Bob, you don't expect a call from Osceola?"

Clara Raymond was not a little astonished at the confusion of her friend, who acted like a school-boy detected in the commission of some crime. He grew very red in the face, coughed and cleared his throat, and then said, rather abruptly:

"No; he might possibly come this way, but I don't expect him. Osceola, you know, is a fine chap, and you needn't have any fear of him."

"I can't say that I have any fear, but I do hope I shall not see him again. If you wish to go, don't stay any longer on my account."

After a few more unimportant words, Bob threw his rifle over his shoulder, and telling Clara to look for his return before nightfall, he passed down the beach, and shortly after disappeared from view.

Left alone, Clara Raymond did not spend her time in idleness. Buster Bob, as a matter of course, was

his own housekeeper, but she saw the opportunity for a display of her taste, as she looked about the cabin, and she spent a half-hour in "setting things to rights," ere she settled fairly in her own mind what she should do.

"I feel so lonely here," she said to herself, as she stood debating the question, "that I have a mind to go to the light-house, and spend the forenoon with uncle Lige; but, after the formal good-by of Mr. Havens, it would look as if I were anxious for his company, and it would hardly be proper for me to do so. I have half a mind to take that gun, which Bob has left, and start off on a hunt, for there is more excitement about that; but I will spend the forenoon in fishing, and when that is fully gone, I can make up my mind as to what is best to do. There! I have settled that point, and now I will get the fishing-tackle ready."

And when she had prepared line and bait she was curiously perplexed about another very trifling matter, which was simply whether she should take the weapon with her or not. Common prudence would have suggested that she should have done so, under any circumstances; but her trouble was that she had a fear that, when she arrived at the other end of the lake, she would find herself strongly tempted to change her mind, and go upon the hunt after all.

"No; I will leave it home," she finally concluded, "and then I can pursue my fishing without any distracting debate with myself."

And having made up her mind to this, she drew the cabin door to, leaving the latch-string out, and passed down the beach to where Bob had left a canoe purposely for her use. Here she paused a moment, and took a survey of the water and surroundings, but not a living soul was visible. She turned her gaze toward the light-house, but the distance was too great for her to distinguish any one, even had there been a person on the look-out.

There was a powerful telescope there, and I wonder whether he feels enough interest in my movements to point it this way."

She smiled at her own question, and wondered why she asked it, and why too she sought to answer it herself.

"Uncle Lige never told me he had a visitor until we were ascending the stairs. He was confused when we came upon him so suddenly, but for all that I like him and find him very entertaining and pleasant company."

She rallied and laughed again to think that she should pause in this manner to speculate upon the young man who had left her but a short time before. Shoving her canoe from shore, she leaped into it, and began paddling for the upper end of the lake, which was her favorite fishing-ground. Her boat moved slowly, and she carefully scanned the shores as she advanced, taking care to give the widest berth to the camping-ground of the Seminoles.

But nothing of an alarming nature was to be seen, and she about concluded that Bob was right in his belief that all danger had gone by, and that uncle Lige was to be left in undisturbed possession of the light-house for an indefinite time to come.

The day bid fair to be quite warm, and reaching the termination of the lake, she brought her canoe to rest in the shade of a large cypress whose branches projected far out over the water, and in a few minutes she was busily employed in her sport.

The fish however proved rather shy this morning, and Clara was not as successful as she had anticipated. The hours passed rapidly by, and when she saw that the sun was close to the meridian, she yet lacked the number of fish that she had hoped to obtain.

"If Bob does not return," she thought, "and no one else calls, there will be an abundance for me. So I will end this excursion."

Desirous of procuring a forked stick upon which to carry the fish from the canoe to the cabin, she sent the canoe in to the land by one sweep of the paddle, and stepped upon the beach.

She had barely done so, when almost precisely in the same manner as before, an Indian stepped forth from the wood, and advanced toward her, with his hand proffered in greeting.

"Osceola!" exclaimed Clara, turning pale and starting back.

"Magnolia of the Forest!" he repeated in reply, "it was thy fragrance that penetrated many miles through the pines and cypresses and brought me here, face to face with thee. My heart leaps with gladness at the sight of thy face."

Repel him as much as she might, the girl did not feel it safe or prudent to refuse to give him her hand, when he thrust out his own. She noted how warm was his grasp, and how heartily he shook it, and how long and lovingly he held on, as though loth to let her go, and she could not but recall the words of Bob, about his being "smitten" with her. He was in love; he could not but betray it. He showed it in every look and word and in his manner.

She appeared as natural and self-possessed as possible, but she regretted, in her heart, the fortune that had brought about this meeting. Better would it have been, had she gone to the light-house, although in violation of her sense of maiden delicacy, and kept out of sight until Osceola should have penetrated so far northward that there was no danger of his return.

But here he was, and Clara addressed herself to the task of making the best thing possible of that which, to say the least, was exceedingly unpleasant.

"But yesterday the warriors of Osceola filled the woods, and now they are gone—but whither?"

"They are journeying northward—they are upon the war-path, and the white men shall tremble, and the women shall bow when they hear the name of Osceola spoken—for much has he been wronged."

"But Osceola is a warrior," said Clara, determined to put in a word for Lige, while she had the opportunity, "and he fights only those who make war against him. Women and children have not harmed his warriors, and they will not seek to harm them. To do so, would not be the act of a brave man."

"But the pale-faces have set their dogs upon the squaws of the Seminoles, and they have chased them to the swamps where they were compelled to hide from them. Why then should they be spared?"

"They have done wrong, if they have made war in this way, but I did not know that such was their practice. But the Seminoles will fight the men only who fight them—I mean by that that their great leader Osceola will not harm them who he knows bear no ill-will toward him."

The chieftain reared his head proudly, and his black eyes flashed, while his face glowed with rude natural eloquence.

"Is it thus that the pale-face makes war? Does he seek only the red-men who he knows are his enemies? Or does he consider that all red-men are evil, and should be swept from the earth?"

Clara felt that she might very appropriately reply in the affirmative to this question; but she had essayed the role of diplomat, and such a frank avowal would only complicate the difficulties in the way of her pet scheme.

"Judge not my race by the acts of a few," she said in extenuation; "every people have a few evil

and raising his left arm, he said, in the low, thunderous tones of profound passion and immovable hatred, like the mutterings of the coming earthquake:

"He bears a white skin and a white heart. There is no Seminole blood in him and he hates the red-man."

"Why does Osceola speak thus, when he stays where he is, and has never injured the warriors of the woods?"

This was said at random of course, but under the belief that Lige had always been a peaceable man; but she was quickly undeceived by the reply of Osceola, which came quickly enough indeed:

"During the darkness of last night, three of my warriors were creeping around the light-house, when he shot one of them through the heart. It was not the first nor the second Indian that has fallen by his rifle."

This was an astounding statement to Clara, but she rallied at once, with some indignation, to the defense of her friend.

"What business had those three warriors to be sneaking around the light-house, in the stillness of night? Their errand could have been for no good, else they would have knocked at the door and asked for admittance."

"They were sent by their chief to find out whether the pale-face kept faithful guard, or whether he slept at night."

"And they found out for him too, and I'll warrant

the world is harder to convince than an Indian, and even when the argument came from such beautiful lips, it still failed to produce any effect upon his barbaric mind.

"Let him then build his tower out in the waters, where it does not offend the eye of the Seminole, and they will disturb him not; but does the Magnolia of the Forest love the old man who has dwelt there for so many years?"

"He is as a father to me, and my heart is filled with pain to hear my brother speak so bitterly of him."

"At the wish of Bob Buster, last night, I drew my warriors off, and sent them northward, that they might not harm his brother; but my warriors will come back, and I will spare him again only for you."

"Then do it for me, and my heart shall ever thank you, and always hold Osceola in grateful remembrance."

"If the Magnolia of the Forest will go with Osceola to his lodge in the wilderness, and there become his queen, then shall the light-house stand forever, and no red-man shall ever do aught against it."

Here it was at last! This was the bargain that Osceola offered, and Clara saw on the instant that this was the whole secret of the matter. This was why the chieftain had arranged this interview, and this was the compact he wished to make.

Comprehending it on the instant, the question in-



"THIS IS ABOUT THE TIME THE SPOOK PUTS IN AN APPEARANCE," SAID BOB, AND IMMEDIATELY ADDED, "THERE IT COMES, TOO!"

men among them, but the others and the good should not be condemned for their sake."

Osceola struck his fist violently upon his left breast, and with flashing eye, exclaimed in a loud, ringing voice:

"All white men are the enemies of Osceola, and he and his warriors have made war upon them all!"

"But what of him?" she asked, pointing toward the cabin down the side of the lake. "What shall be done with the one who dwells there?"

"He is not a white man; his skin is white, but his heart is red. He is my brother, and the brother of Osceola is a Seminole. He has been kind to the red-man, and not a hair of his head shall be lost through them."

"But is he the only man of my race, against whom you will not raise the tomahawk?" she asked.

"He is all, and Osceola told his warriors last night, who came from the north and south, that he who lived in the cabin by the Haunted Lake was their brother, and who raised weapon against him, should be slain, whether he be white man or red, and they shouted and brandished their weapons in air, and so they will do—every warrior of my tribe."

"But what of the good man who dwells there?" she asked, pointing toward the light-house. "Surely when his arm has been raised against no red-man, they will not seek to disturb him, when at his post of duty?"

CHAPTER VII. OSCEOLA'S WOOING.

CLARA RAYMOND shuddered, as she saw the face of Osceola, the Seminole. The reference to the light-house keeper had enraged instead of soothing him,

you, that he never raised his arm against a red-man unless he was compelled to do so. Does not Osceola concede the right to every brave man to defend himself against danger?"

"But the pale-face has no business here; this is the hunting-ground of the Seminoles: the pale-faces cheated and deceived them; they shall all be driven into the sea, and the red-man shall again have all his own."

It was the same old argument that was used by King Philip, and Pontiac, and Tecumseh, and Osceola and Red-Cloud, down through a period of two centuries, the one plea in which he can no more be shaken than can the rock of Gibraltar; but Clara Raymond met this special case with no little ingenuity.

"Does Osceola believe that the pale-faces have the right to sail upon the great water yonder?"

"The red-man does not harm the pale-face who stays upon the great lake, but he will not stay there."

"Then Osceola should love the man who lives in the light-house; for he lives there to keep his brethren off the coast. Were it not for him many vessels would be driven by the storms upon these dangerous rocks, and when their great canoes went to pieces, they would have to swim ashore and live upon the hunting-grounds of the Seminoles, and so in time Florida would be over run with them. But he keeps the light burning at night so that they may see far away and not come near your hunting-grounds."

This was putting the matter in a new light, and had Osceola been unprejudiced it could not but have produced a great effect upon him; but no being in

stantly presented itself, as to how she should meet it. A direct refusal would only exasperate him, and would be likely to cause most unpleasant consequences. It was a more difficult matter for her to arrange than the general argument, which he had advanced, and she was silent for a moment, her eyes dropping to the ground, while his burning orbs were fixed intently upon her.

But Clara possessed a woman's ready tact, and not concealing the surprise which she felt, she said:

"The skin and heart of the Magnolia are white, those of Osceola are red. It is not fitting, therefore, that we should be mated together."

"But in the lodge of Osceola, both will become alike; the Great Spirit will smile upon such a union, for it will save the scalps of many a pale-face. Then let not the Magnolia hesitate, for she shall become queen of the Seminoles."

But she shook her head, sadly, for her heart was deeply stirred, and she felt that she was on dangerous ground.

Bob was gone, and would not return for hours. Havens was at the light-house, where he expected to remain during the day. Lige was not likely to come to this out-of-the-way place. She was therefore alone, beyond human help, and entirely in the power of Osceola, with no one to restrain him from acting out his own will.

And while he had shown consideration and thought in his treatment of her before, yet she knew that the chieftain was bitter and revengeful, of strong passions and implacable hatred, possessing many virtues, but not without the worst vices of his race. She could only pray that she was well rid of his

presence, and do her utmost to effect that end. She said as gently as she could:

"The words of my brother surprise me, and he must give me time to consider them; I cannot answer until another moon comes and goes. Let Osceola go upon his war-path, and when he returns come to me and I will give him my answer."

This apparently fair proposal placed the chieftain at too great a disadvantage for him to accept it. He had seen enough already of the difficulties of procuring an audience with her, for him to let her go, when such an opportunity as this was placed in his hands. He knew that she visited this region only at long intervals, and if he permitted her to depart now, the chances were that in all human probability he would never see her again.

"If Osceola goes north upon the war-path, and is gone till three moons come and go, will the Magnolia of the Forest meet him here alone, and tell him what her answer is?" asked the chief, his eyes still fixed intently upon her.

It was a strong temptation to indulge in a falsehood, and perhaps there are few who would not have considered deception justifiable under the circumstances; but great as was the stress, Clara could not feel herself warranted in doing so. She still hoped by appealing to the generosity and chivalry of the chieftain to dissuade him from the hopes he entertained.

"Does my brother—the great chieftain of the Seminoles—wish to pain the heart of the Magnolia?"

therein doing what she had never before done in her life. Had everything been planned from the beginning, it could not have been more successfully arranged than it was.

"What shall I do?" was the question that presented itself above all others in that dreadful moment. In the hope of gaining valuable time, she affected not to understand his earnestness, but stood as if debating what reply to make.

Could she turn round, leap into her canoe, and push out into the lake? If she could do so, ere he could prevent, she was sure of being able to keep out of his reach, so long as he was unprovided with a canoe. But Bob had so many placed at different points along the lake, that it would take him but a few minutes to find one, and then he would speedily overtake her, admitting that she could succeed in getting beyond his grasp at the outset of this venture, a feat that was exceedingly problematical in its results.

There really seemed to be no resource for her except to brave it out as best she could, striving to seek delay in the matter, so as to place herself beyond the power of the Indian.

"Osceola," said she, raising her eyes again, and looking him bravely in the face, "I cannot make up my mind to go with you. It is a great and important question that you have proposed to me. Go with me to the cabin of the man who is a friend to both of us, and there we will discuss it."

What particular advantage she was to gain by

to conduct the Magnolia of the Forest across the Haunted Lake, while she can sit and watch the shadows upon the shore."

Not daring to refuse, she took her place in the stern, and he immediately followed, seizing the paddle, and with one powerful sweep of the oar sending it far out into the lake.

The position of the Indian was such that his face was naturally fronting the girl, although he frequently turned his head and glanced over his shoulder, as if to make certain of the direction of the canoe.

And proceeding down the lake, the eyes of Clara naturally turned toward the light-house, rising white and clear against the blue sky, and as still and apparently as devoid of life as if it were a vast marble monument erected to the memory of some fallen hero.

"Oh, if either uncle Lige or Mr. Havens but knew of my strait," she could not help thinking, "how quickly they would come to my relief; but they must think all goes well with me—"

She suddenly paused, for high up on the look-out of the light-house she saw something waving as if intended as a signal for her. It seemed as if it were a man swinging his hat, but the height and distance were so great that she could not make certain of its exact nature.

"He supposes that I am taking a boat-ride for mere pleasure," she concluded, as she looked intently in that direction. "It must be Mr. Havens,



OSCEOLA CLOSED HIS LEGS OVER THE PANTHER'S BACK, AND IN AN INSTANT HAD BURIED THE KNIFE TO THE HILT IN ITS SIDE.

"Osceola is too great a warrior to harm a hair of the head of a woman, though she be of the race which are his enemies."

"Then let him not press this matter further; let him see that the white and red can never mate. Let him always be a brother to me; let me be a sister to him, and part as friends who hope to meet hereafter in the spirit land."

"But the Magnolia shall be queen of the Seminoles; in the lodge of Osceola, she shall reign over all the squaws of his tribe. If her heart pines for her home, Osceola will become a white man and take her there. He will be her slave, and bring her such game from the woods, and make her such belts of wampum, that she will give him her heart, and thank the Great Spirit that brought them together."

She saw no escaping a direct refusal, and again she shook her head.

"It can not be—it can not be."

"It must be—it shall be!"

These words were uttered in a low voice, deep and profound with emotion, and as he spoke, Osceola took a step nearer her.

In an instant Clara comprehended that he had resolved to possess himself of her at all hazards. Failing in his arguments, as he had done, then he was ready to use violence even.

What evil fate was it that had helped him to-day? She had three friends at no great distance, who were ready to give their lives in her defense, and yet they were as effectually removed beyond appeal as if a thousand miles distant.

And then she had no weapons of any kind with which to defend herself. For the trivial cause, already mentioned, she had left her rifle at the cabin,

this course, Clara would have found it difficult to tell; but it would give her time, and during the agonizing interval she might be able to form some plan to assist her out of the dreadful dilemma. Perhaps Bob might have providentially returned; perhaps Havens had changed his mind, or Lige himself had concluded to make a call upon her. Perhaps—a thousand things, any of which would be better than to stand here, face to face with the dreadful creature that the Seminole had now become in her eyes.

Somewhat to her surprise, he consented, almost the moment she proposed it.

"Osceola will go with the Magnolia to the lodge of his brother, but he is not there; he is gone for the day. He knows that Osceola wishes him to remain away until the sun goes down, and he will not return till then."

This remark of the chief gave Clara Raymond a most painful pang, for it suggested at once the thought of a collusion between him and Bob. Could it be possible that her friend, in whom she placed such implicit trust, had purposely played into the hands of Osceola? She could scarcely credit the horrible suspicion, and yet his words seemed to imply it.

Could she have known the words that he had uttered to Hugh Havens, what other conclusion would have been possible for her to reach?

But checking her tumultuous emotions in the one overwhelming thought of the great danger in which she stood, she acted upon the consent of Osceola, without a moment's delay, starting down the beach. But he checked her.

"We will go as you came; Osceola will be proud

for uncle Lige would hardly indulge in such playfulness. If he would only use the telescope he might be led to suspect the truth, but he cannot, cannot know how sorely I need his help."

She was careful, in her excitement even, to keep Osceola from making the discovery, and when he turned his head she looked off over the lake and toward the woods, in as unconcerned a manner as possible, while, fortunately for her, he seemed to bestow little attention upon her. He was paddling quite slowly, and instead of following the line of the shore, was keeping well out in the lake, like one who was fearful of shallow water.

When he turned his head again she threw up her hand and returned the signal—doing it in an instant, as it were, and then, fearful of attracting the attention of her companion, she waited till his head was turned again.

"It may be possible that one of them has the telescope turned in this direction," she reflected, "and if so, they will see that it is an Indian whom I have in the canoe, and they will understand my gesture."

This consisted of a beckoning motion, such as one would make when he desired to call another to him. Clara repeated it several times, and in her excitement she partly rose up.

The slight disturbance in the canoe was noticed by the keen Osceola, who turned his head back like a flash of lightning, catching the maiden in the very act of beckoning to her friends upon the top of the light-house.

"Why does the Magnolia of the Forest seek to call the enemies of Osceola to her? Do her eyes delight in blood and violence that she wishes to see

the white and red-men clutch at each other's throats?"

Overwhelmed with confusion, Clara sunk down in her seat again, and covered her face with her hands, refusing to answer or exchange words with him, even when he had repeated the question several times. She could only pray:

"Desert me not, oh, Heaven! in my extremity! Deliver me out of the power of this wicked man."

She recalled, in that moment, an expression she had heard made both by her father and uncle Lige, to the effect that if the Seminoles should retreat into the swamps of Florida, no army in the world could follow them. Consequently they would be safe from interruption there, and no human power could extricate her from the grasp of Osceola, if he should once take her away. Suddenly she looked up and exclaimed:

"Osceola, you have paddled past the cabin!"

There was an evil light in his eyes as he replied:

"I am taking the Magnolia of the Forest to the lodge of Osceola, where she will be made queen of the Seminoles."

CHAPTER VIII.

CRUEL FATE.

It was a terrible moment to Clara Raymond when Osceola thus announced in unmistakable terms his intention of taking her away with him, whether she was willing or not.

They had already passed, by a considerable distance, the cabin of Bob, and, as the necessity for all further dissembling was thrown aside, he dipped his paddle deeper into the water, and the canoe sped like an arrow over the lake, heading toward the northern shore, at a point about half-way between the western extremity and the Seminole camping-ground.

The maiden sat in the stern of the canoe, like one stunned and bewildered by some awful calamity. Pressing her hands to her forehead, she could only murmur to Heaven:

"Desert me not in my extremity! Help me, oh God, or I sink!"

Comprehending as fully as she did the nature of Osceola—that daring, relentless, revengeful disposition, mixed as it sometimes was with a chivalrous manner, she knew that it was useless to appeal to his generosity or mercy. When he stepped forth from the wood and met her upon the beach, he had fully resolved that she should go with him. He had first tried his powers of persuasion, and having failed in that, he had thrown off all disguise, and made known his purpose in the words given at the close of the preceding chapter.

And was there not a dark combination of circumstances to assist the wily Seminole—so dark indeed as to point to something beyond mere chance? Was it mere accident that sent Hugh Havens to the light-house, for the day, and dispatched Bob to the wood, so as to leave the way clear for the machinations of Osceola? Such singular coincidences do sometimes occur in the affairs of this world, but there was an awful suspicion that would not down, and that caused her fully as much distress and anguish of mind as did the crushing sense of her own position of captive.

She made no reply to Osceola, but, as the canoe continued on its arrow-like course, she cast one appealing look, first to the quiet, deserted cabin of Bob, standing upon the southern shore, and then to the light-house, rising sharp and clear against the steel-blue sky in the distance.

But she no longer saw the signal upon the top—nothing but the boom of the breakers against the beach reached her ears, and a few more tremendous sweeps of the sinewy arms, and the bow ran far up on the beach, and he leaped out, caught up his rifle, and turning around waited for her.

As she stepped rather hesitatingly forward, he reached out his hand in his polite way to assist her, but she declined, and the next moment stood on the sand beside him. He was motionless a moment, and then uttering something in his own tongue, which she did not understand, the two plunged into the wood, and she began her terrible, sorrowful journey.

As a matter of course, Osceola took the lead, Clara following close behind him. His back was thus toward her, and, at first sight, it might seem that she was thus given the opportunity of dodging beyond his reach, during some moment when his attention was diverted, as it was clearly out of his power to keep his eye on her continually, when she was in the rear.

But had she been compelled to walk directly in front, the chances would have been as good; for Osceola was so skilled in the ways of the wood, that, as he walked along, it may be said that he did so absolutely without noise, stepping over the leaves as if he were walking upon a velvet carpet. There was a smoothness and silence in this serpentine motion, which Clara herself, with all her lightness and grace of movement, could not imitate, and so it was that every step she took was clearly audible to her captor, who would be certain to detect any *coup* that she might undertake.

Still, terrible as was her situation, the brave-hearted girl did not dare to look far into the future and picture the time when she should reach the Seminole village, and there be compelled to become the wife of Osceola, without the remotest possibility of rescue upon the part of her friends, or escape by herself.

She endeavored, so far as possible, to keep a correct idea of the direction she was pursuing. The sun being almost directly overhead, she was unable to tell much by that, but the sound of the Gulf of Mexico upon her left, with its ceaseless booming

against the shore convinced her that the chief was proceeding almost due north; and so, should fortune favor her and enable her to give the wily villain the slip, she would know what course to take in order to reach the protecting light-house.

"Perhaps he may go far enough north to take me in the vicinity of Tampa," she added, with a slight thrill of hope, "and I may find father there."

But she resolutely kept down these risings of hope, and addressed herself to the stern duty that was before her. As a matter of course, Osceola could not but know that she would seize any opportunity that might present itself, for the purpose of slipping from his clutches, and he would be prepared for it. She concluded, therefore, to make an attempt to deceive him into believing that she accepted his proposals and was quite eager to become Queen of the Seminoles.

This self-imposed task was exceedingly difficult on account of its distastefulness to her, coupled with the conviction that Osceola was too shrewd to be deceived. He had presented the matter in as glowing a light as possible on the shores of the Haunted Lake, and she had refused them so utterly and emphatically that he might well question the genuineness of such a sudden conversion.

Since the words recorded, the chieftain had not opened his mouth. Ordinarily he was quite loquacious, but it was evident that he felt the constraint of his position and did not choose to make an attempt at conciliation where such a thing was impossible; but Clara, having determined upon her line of conduct, hurried her footsteps, bringing herself directly beside, and only a few feet distant.

Osceola turned his head in surprise, at seeing this movement, and she asked him in her ordinary manner:

"How far northward lies the village of the Seminoles, and the lodge of Osceola?"

The chieftain looked up at the sun, which had hardly passed the meridian, and replied, pointing a little below the orb:

"When the sun to-morrow reaches there, then shall the Magnolia of the Forest become the Queen of the Seminoles."

"And will the wives of the warriors acknowledge her as their queen?" she asked, with an eager, questioning look.

Osceola paused, with the old fire flaming in his face and eyes, and brandished his right arm with a gesture peculiarly his own.

"What Seminole dare refuse to obey Osceola? Is not his wife their queen? And let her refuse who dare, and I will brain her with this same tomahawk which has more than once cleft the skull of white and red-man alike! When Magnolia becomes the wife of Osceola, all shall do her reverence!"

He suddenly paused, with that peculiar start which a hunter gives when a suspicious sound strikes his ear, and grasping his rifle, he looked behind, and on each side with lightning-like quickness, as if momentarily expecting the appearance of some enemy.

Clara heard nothing, but she clasped her hand to her heart, with a sudden gasp, as the thought thrilled her that uncle Lige or Hugh Havens were close at hand, coming swift on the track of her captor.

"Oh that I had a gun or some weapon with which to assist whatever friend it is!" was her lament, as the chieftain turned his back toward her, in such a posture, that had she the means, she could have shot him dead or desperately wounded him. She bent her head to listen, hoping each moment to hear the deadly crack of a rifle, or to see the stern face of uncle Lige, or the pale, determined face of Hugh emerge from the wood, and command him to yield up the captive who was so ruthlessly being taken away from her home and friends.

The two stood for several seconds in this motionless position, when a crackling of the bushes was heard, and both eyes became fixed upon a point in the forest, where the agitation of the undergrowth showed that something was approaching.

Osceola held his rifle to fire at an instant's notice, while Clara's heart throbbed painfully at the fear that some friend of hers was about to be shot before her eyes, before he could be aware of his danger.

As she saw that he must come in sight the next moment, she gave utterance to a scream intended as a warning, and then stepped back and away from the Seminole.

The latter glared at her a moment, as if infuriated at what he regarded as a piece of treachery; but he said nothing, and the next moment she saw him raise his rifle to his shoulder, and holding it but an instant, he fired it toward the point where the agitation of the undergrowth was seen.

A horrible fascination directed her eyes toward the spot, where she expected to see the lifeless form of her lover stretched; but, instead, her eyes were greeted with the sight of an immense Florida panther.

Osceola was a capital shot, but like all marksmen he was not unerring. He had fired the instant the stir in the bushes told him precisely where the creature was, and certain that it was no human enemy, he had fired with a certain haste and carelessness, which he would not have shown under other circumstances.

The consequence was that instead of killing he only wounded the beast, which, being unusually large and fierce for its kind, uttered a low, guttural growl, and pausing only long enough to identify his foe, he went for Osceola on the jump.

The Seminole expected something like this the moment he saw the panther was not killed, and he began reloading his rifle, with the celerity at his command, knowing that if he could get the charge rammed home in time, he could finish the career of the ferocious brute with perfect certainty on the in-

stant; but, failing in that, there remained nothing but a hand-to-hand encounter with this most dangerous creature of that latitude.

The wonderful agility of Osceola might have enabled him to elude the panther, until he could reload his piece; but in that case he would be certain to turn upon the defenseless maiden, and inflict a horrible death. While the considerations of humanity and pity might have weighed very little in the mind of the chieftain, yet he remembered that she was soon to be installed as *Queen of the Seminoles*, and wife of Osceola; consequently her life must not be sacrificed for any consideration.

The Indian therefore stood his ground, and loaded his rifle with a rapidity that he had never displayed before—all the time keeping an eye upon the infuriated beast, who did not delay his progress on his account.

Osceola got the powder down and had the bullet rammed home by the time the panther had passed half the distance between them. Flirting the ramrod out and flinging it to the ground, he then jerked back the hammer and raised his horn for the purpose of pouring the powder into the pan. Had he possessed a percussion lock and cap he would have succeeded; but by the time the black particles began to pour out the narrow nozzle, the panther was upon him—saving himself from a sure and instant death by barely a second of time.

Seeing that his gun was of no use to him, Osceola threw it aside, and whipping out his large hunting-knife, prepared himself for the deadly encounter.

The brute, bleeding and furious, made a nimble leap directly at him, when some six or eight feet distant, his claws outspread, so as to rend him to pieces as he descended; but the Indian, with a cat-like agility, leaped to one side and drove his knife deep into his side as he shot past him, with a vigor that it seemed ought to have been fatal; but which only served to infuriate the beast still more.

Osceola was desirous of avoiding "closing in" with his foe; for although in the wounded condition of the latter, he felt quite confident of being able to dispatch him in the end, yet he was almost certain of being handled in such an ugly manner that his clothes would be rent to tatters, and it was more than likely that he would receive more than one grievous wound.

The well-known agility of the panther made this a task of great difficulty, as he showed a determination to grapple with his foe, and now turned upon him with such fury that Osceola darted behind a small cypress, so as to interpose it between them, while the exasperated brute made at him like a frantic catamount, clawing, scratching and darting from one side of the tree to another, while the red-skin, with his keen hunting-knife, struck his revengeful blows at whatever part of the animal came within reach.

The smallness of the cypress enabled the panther to strike on both sides of it at once, somewhat after the fashion of a wild beast that finds himself opposed by the tantalizing bars of his cage, and Osceola, compelled to dart backward and forward, and unable to elude the brute, made a leap behind another tree a few feet distant, to which he was instantly followed by his persistent foe.

The object of Osceola was to keep himself clear, if possible, of the beast until his severe wounds would exhaust him, so that he might give him his finishing blow without danger to himself; but his tenacity of life was really wonderful, and although his front was covered with wounds, and he was rendered tenfold more hideous by the blood smeared all over his front, and flying in hot drops from his red jaws, yet his strength and activity for the present was greater than ordinary—seemingly exerted to the culminating point by the pain of his hurts and the sight of his adversary, unharmed, and managing with so much skill to keep his body safe beyond his reach.

Whether Osceola could have maintained this species of warfare until his foe was exhausted may well be doubted; for his own exertions were of such a swift, ceaseless and terrific nature, that his tough and sinewy frame must have succumbed. The contest was of such a fierce character, and the panther was so unrelenting in his struggles, that the red-skin dare not take his eyes from him for more than an instant at a time, and then only long enough to locate the tree-trunk, which he had resolved upon using as a shield. This incessant attention to the maneuvers of his foe prevented Osceola from knowing the exact nature of the obstructions encountered by his feet, many of the vines and bushes of which seriously embarrassed him.

Still his remarkable agility enabled him to dart and leap about like a monkey, escaping some of the spiteful blows aimed at him by the merest hair's breadth, while the lightning-like strokes of the brute prevented anything like an effective return being given him. Osceola was wondering at the tenacity of the panther, and had about made up his mind that he would have to close in with him after all, when his feet were caught by some tangled vines, and he fell violently to the ground, face upward!

This brought matters to a climax at once, Osceola made no attempt to rise, as it would have placed him at a greater disadvantage, but he executed a feat that was little short of marvelous.

The panther landed squarely upon him, but ere he could close his ravening mouth, the Seminole threw his left arm over his neck, and pressed it so powerfully that the head of the beast was held rigidly against the side of his own, in such a position that he could not bite, while at the same instant Osceola closed his legs over his back and gave him a regular "grizzly hug." Of course this tremendous effort could last but a moment, but in that moment he buried the knife to the hilt in the side of the panther, reaching the seat of life, and ending the career of

the brute, which was just on the ebb, at the instant of the death-grapple.

Then releasing himself, Osceola rose unharmed to his feet and looked around for the Magnolia of the Forest. But she was gone!

CHAPTER IX. DESPAIR.

OSCEOLA'S extremity was the maiden's opportunity, and with that quick wit which often marks the conduct of the most timid of her sex, in the very climax of danger, she saw, the instant the panther revealed himself, that the chance for which she had been praying had come.

The Seminole stood with his back to her and could not see her movements. The same acuteness of hearing was still his, but his attention was concentrated upon the peril in front, and he would not be likely to observe any stealthy retrogression upon her part.

There was no hesitation upon the part of Clara, when convinced that the moment for action had come. The same moment that saw the panther burst from the brake, saw the girl make a hasty retreat into the wood. She walked backward, with her face upon the Seminole, until she saw the brute leap at him, when the intervening bushes shut him from view, and she turned and sped like a frightened fawn.

The consciousness that the opportunity so earnestly desired was hers, came upon her with such overwhelming power as almost to unnerve her for the time, and she paused with her hand upon her heart, scarcely able to stand, for its tumultuous throbbing, while she gazed furtively behind her, half expecting to see the flaming Osceola rushing through the wood in mad pursuit.

"I would rather see the bloody panther ten thousand times," she said to herself, "than his hated form. Heaven help me now in my peril!"

She quickly recovered, and again darted through the wood like a timid fawn, only pausing when panting and exhausted and then speeding away again, with a velocity that made sad havoc with her beautiful garments, and that scratched and tore her hands as if every step had been through the brambles and briars; but she heeded not this; she cared for nothing except to get away from the abominated Osceola. Further and further into the wilderness—anywhere, so that it took her further away from the possibility of recapture by him—and so she rushed on, impelled by that one wild desire, and running as if she heard the relentless tread of her pursuer in the thicket behind without looking to the right or left, or once thinking whither her frantic footsteps might lead her.

When Clara had penetrated to something like a half-mile in this manner, and still heard no sounds of pursuit, she began to collect her thoughts and reason more calmly. From rushing forward at her wild, headlong speed, she settled down to a more rapid walk, restraining her burning impatience to run with might and main until she could be certain of making it "tell" in some effectual way.

"Osceola will be able to follow my trail," she mused, as she walked along in this manner; "he is so much accustomed to the woods, and can run so much faster than I, that he will be sure to overtake me before nightfall, unless I can manage to throw him off the track, or the panther succeeds in killing him—that is too blessed a consummation to come to pass."

But precisely how this was to be done was the puzzling question to Clara. She remembered to have heard uncle Lige tell how he had eluded his pursuers by "doubling" upon his tracks, and taking to the water. She was not certain of what was precisely meant by the first expression, but supposed it had reference to the confusing of the trail, by going several times over the same ground. It perhaps was not singular, when she paused to retrace her steps, that the thought of going toward Osceola again, as if she were seeking to meet him, was so repugnant to her that she desisted instantly, and ran a short distance, as if to make up for the time thrown away.

Then, as there was no water near, she meditated climbing a tree and concealing herself among the branches, but after all she could not see as this bid fair to accomplish anything, and it necessitated the duty of *keeping still*—which she could not bring herself to as long as she had the power to move on.

The only thing possible was for her to take to the water, if such a means could be found; but she had not seen a drop since fleeing from Osceola, nor indeed since leaving Haunted Lake, and she now set about discovering some stream or pond which would serve the purpose.

This was a matter of great difficulty, as she was obliged to proceed entirely by chance, and might pass within a few rods of some large body, and yet fail altogether of finding it.

And now too that she had begun the search, she became sensible of a tormenting thirst, intensified by her severe exertion, and the warmth of the woods, which seemed almost suffocating among the close pines and cypresses. She realized, too, to its fullest extent, the giant task she had undertaken—fully warranted indeed by the ends to be gained, but none the less formidable for all that.

She paused and listened, and could not make certain whether the dull, hollow roar was the sound of the ocean beating upon the shore, or whether it was that solemn monotone which is always heard in the depth of the forest. This proved that Osceola had been journeying inland, instead of following a direction parallel to the shore, and that she was already a goodly distance from the sea-coast; but she took scarcely time to consider this in her haste to assure her own position against recapture from the one

whom she dreaded more than the wildest denizens of the wood. Onward, still onward she pressed, allowing herself scarcely time to catch a few moments' rest, although she was panting and perspiring and ready at times to drop from exhaustion.

She observed, too, by the glimpses which she caught of the sun, that it was quite low in the sky, and that night was at no great distance. Whether this was a time to be longed for or not, she hardly knew; for while it increased, perhaps, her chances of escape, there was still probability that it might only defer her recapture until the following morning, and in the mean time she would be exposed to all the terrors of a night in the Florida forest—perchance to be a prey to wild animals—to suffer from hunger and thirst, and liable to come upon a band of roving Seminoles at any time, who might show her less consideration than did Osceola even.

She was in the midst of these gloomy misgivings when she uttered a low cry of joy; for through the opening in the woods she caught sight of the glimmer of water, and rushing forward, she found herself standing the next moment upon the shores of a running stream, fully a hundred feet in width.

In her delight, Clara stooped down by the margin and quaffed her full of the delicious fluid, without pausing to notice that the water was sluggish and quite impure. So great indeed was her thirst that it is hardly probable that this would have checked her, although it might have prevented the full enjoyment of all that she swallowed; but the stream looked so like an old friend that she clapped her hands with delight, and sat down on the brink to rest her weary limbs.

"Never did the dying traveler in the desert welcome the sight of the oasis more gladly than I welcome thee!" she exclaimed, as she looked upon the broad, still surface, covered here and there with tropical plants, driftwood that seemed scarcely to move, logs and inanimate objects, while it wound with such a devious course through the forest that the creek was visible but a short distance, whether she looked up or down.

The enthusiasm was all very natural perhaps; but it was materially dampened when she came to ask herself the practical question as to how she was to make use of it now that she had succeeded in discovering it. It was not to be expected that she would find a canoe ready and waiting for her, nor, in her natural timidity, was she ready to doff her shoes and attempt to wade through it like some fisherman with his net. Even had she the requisite courage, the depth was too great and the bottom too treacherous for her to endanger her life in that manner.

And so, driven forward by her vague unrest, she wandered along the bank of the stream, whose current was so sluggish and still, that she could only conjecture whether she was going with or against it, hoping that some means would present itself for crossing to the opposite side, and yet unable to tell what it really was that she was seeking.

"I wonder whether some of these logs or fallen trees would not answer my purpose," she finally asked herself, pausing and looking around her. "Here seems to be one that must be heavy enough to buoy me up."

As she spoke, she advanced close to the edge of the water, and reaching out her foot, placed it upon what seemed to be a huge log; and, as she did so, she observed a curious movement that caused her to leap back with a strange terror.

This involuntary recoil saved her life, for at that moment, that which she had imagined to be a harmless log, developed into a hideous alligator, which threw open a pair of ponderous jaws, disclosing a vast red chasm, bound by rows of serrated teeth, and they closed with a thumping click within a few inches of her body.

With a wild scream of terror, the maiden made a tremendous leap backward among the trees, the horrid reptile plunging after her and thrashing the brush and saplings in his furious efforts to secure his prey. But for these obstructions, the history of the poor girl would have terminated here; but, instead of being paralyzed by the awful danger, she was thrilled with superhuman energy, and bounded through the narrow spaces with as much agility as Osceola himself had displayed a short time before in escaping from the ravening panther.

A few minutes sufficed to carry her beyond the reach of this ferocious alligator, and she scarcely paused when she found that he had relinquished his short but terrific pursuit.

"What a narrow escape!" she ejaculated, as she thanked Heaven from the depths of her heart. "Only to think of my placing my foot upon the back of a sleeping alligator, that could have crushed me to a jelly in an instant!"

And then yielding to her curiosity, she stealthily approached the creek again, at a point lower down and cautiously peered through the trees to make a more critical survey than she had yet done.

And she then saw, what curiously enough had escaped her notice heretofore, that these innocent-looking logs were nearly all repulsive alligators, basking in the sun, with their backs just lying above the water, while they were too sluggish and lazy to stir until their prey came almost within their very jaws.

No concealing of the trail here by stepping into the water, except by *ending* it forever! No; Clara shrunk back with a shudder, wondering how it was that she could have been so blind, not to see the frightful fate that threatened her from the moment she approached the edge of the creek, to where the hideous reptile so startlingly revealed himself.

"I must keep wandering on until I reach the sea," she concluded, as she withdrew from such a dangerous neighborhood. "There, I shall not be afraid to

advance far enough into the breakers to conceal my steps, and then I can hide in the forest again and pursue my journey without molestation.

This seemed to be the true course for her to follow, and she aimed at once to reach salt water, which once found she could easily direct herself to the light-house.

To a young lady, however, lost in the woods, with no certain knowledge of her exact situation, this was hard enough to do, as she still found herself unable to tell in what direction to go. When she paused and listened, she was sure that she could detect the boom and swell of the sea, and yet incline her head and ear in whatever direction, there was no certainty of the course to follow in order to reach it. If she should keep along the margin of the alligator-haunted stream, she was as likely to reach a larger one, of which this was the tributary, and which eventually fell into the Atlantic on the east, and before she could hope to reach salt water in that direction her strength must yield, and she herself would have to succumb to the dreadful hardships of the forest.

And so like the wanderer who finds himself entirely lost, she wandered aimlessly forward, driven thereto by that strange desire to get forward, and with no clearly defined idea of where she was coming out, or what point she was hoping to reach, except a general hope that she would succeed in the end in striking the Gulf.

Clara had sauntered along in this manner until the gathering gloom in the woods told her that night was closing in, and that she must look somewhere for shelter until daylight should come again.

The first refuge that naturally suggested itself was the trees, and she was peering upward, searching for such a perch, when she was brought to a sudden stand-still by a sound in the woods that caused the blood to curdle in her veins. It was a cry, the precise meaning she did not know, but which her own instinct taught her was of the most dreadful nature, and which boded the worst possible ill to her. A wild, strange, quivering cry, that pierced through the forest like the notes of a trumpet, a signal or call that told that somebody or something was on her trail, and coming down upon her with speed of the wind.

"Take heed," was what it said, "a new danger has burst upon you. A relentless fate is descending, and, if refuge is not speedily found, it will be all too late. Flee, without a moment's pause."

"Surely, I have heard that cry before," was the reflection of Clara as she stood gazing furtively about her; "that cry has reached us at the light-house from the woods, and uncle Lige compressed his lips with anger when he heard it."

All at once, she recollected its meaning. It was the long, fearful baying of the bloodhound, by which it announces that it is upon the trail of its victim, and it was surely speeding nearer and nearer her each moment.

And then Clara recalled all that she knew of these frightful animals. She remembered once, when she was hunting with Lige, that one of the enormous black brutes plunged from the wood after them, and was only quieted by a bullet from the keeper's gun. She remembered his great size and fierceness, and the statement of her companion, that many of the Seminoles possessed these animals, and that in the more northern portion of the territory, where the war was mainly raging, both they and the United States authorities used them against each other.

Again that blood-curdling cry rang through the woods, so much nearer than before, that she felt it would not do to delay another moment in seeking a shelter from its fury. As a matter of course, trees were in any number about her, and it required but a short time for her to fix upon one, whose limbs were low enough for her to seize upon them and raise herself from the ground; and when she found herself safely perched at a height of twenty feet or more, it was with a feeling of relief, which it would be difficult to describe.

It was well that she had used such haste, for she had no more than fairly reached her perch, when the bay of the hound was heard directly beneath the tree, and peering downward in the gloom, Clara saw the immense black body of the brute, with his head turned upward, as if seeking his victim. Catching sight of her dress, as she crouched against the tree, he gave out that frightful howl by which the creature makes known that he has treed his victim, and is calling to his master to come forward and claim him; and then, as if impatient to bury his fangs in the tender body of the shrinking maiden, the long-drawn howl merged into several short barks, like the ravenous wolf, whose mouth almost reaches its prey over its head.

The tremendous efforts of the dog caused some apprehension upon the part of Clara; but when she came to consider that nature never intended a dog to climb a tree, she came to the conclusion that she was safe, from his fangs at least, so long as she maintained her position in the tree, and she came to look upon his frantic efforts with no little composure, compared to the alarm that agitated her, when she asked herself the cause of her being treed in this fashion.

It is not the custom of the bloodhound, when trained, to wander away for any distance from its owner, nor did those of Florida start in pursuit of a fugitive, unless their owners set them upon the trail; so there was every reason to believe that there was some one immediately in the rear of this ferocious brute, who would soon put in an appearance, and he was dreaded by the maiden, far more than was the merciless bloodhound.

The darkness increased so rapidly that looking down from her perch, Clara could only see a dark, shadowy body moving to and fro, as it refused to be

still for a moment, while nothing could keep more faithful ward and watch than he, over his helpless prey, that soon, like the ripe apple, must fall into his maw.

The persistency of these creatures is something wonderful; and, in case no one came forward to interrupt this particular bloodhound, he was certain to "shadow" that tree until exhausted nature should place the poor girl at his mercy. They seem to be gotten up by nature for the express purpose of hunting fugitives.

Night had fairly settled over the forest, and no other human being appearing upon the scene, Clara began to see what means she could adopt to prevent her falling into the power of the hound. She felt no disposition to sleep, but apprehensive that the insidious foe might steal upon her, she assumed the best position possible, so that, should she become insensible, she would not lose her balance and fall to the ground.

All at once the bloodhound ceased his howling, and looking down through the branches, Clara distinctly saw the figure of a man walking slowly around the trunk of the tree and peering upward, undoubtedly searching for the "critter" that had been treed by his dog. The moon that was just rising above the tree-tops gave her quite a clear view of him, so that she made certain it was an Indian, while on account of the dense shrubbery and branches by which she was enveloped, it was about impossible for him even to distinguish her position in the tree.

Clara Raymond sat as still as death—only turning her head to watch the movements of the person, so far as she was able. She could see him circle slowly around as silently as a shadow while he peered intently upward, as if determined to unravel the mystery by the mere aid of his sight alone.

It was plain that he did not know the nature of the object over his head, from which the maiden concluded that he was some Indian hunter, whose dog had accidentally struck her trail, when both were hunting in the wood, and the red-skin was not particularly anxious to grapple with the fugitive, until more certain of its precise nature.

For fully half an hour the red-skin groped about in this manner, during which Clara was fearful that he would climb the tree, in which case her discovery and capture were certain; but he seemed unwilling to attack a foe in the dark, and finally drew off with his dog and departed.

Our heroine listened and watched for a long time, but heard and saw nothing more of either, and finally sunk into a heavy slumber, which lasted through the remainder of the night and which was not disturbed by any startling fall to the ground.

Naturally her first proceeding was to look for her enemies; but nothing was to be seen of them, and congratulating herself upon her deliverance from them, she carefully descended to the ground, and paused a minute to consider what she should do. Little time was given her for such thoughts, when a rustling of the leaves arrested her ear, and turning her head, she saw the bloodhound walking slowly toward her, and by his side and holding him in restraint was an Indian—and he was Osceola, the Seminole!

CHAPTER X.

THE PURSUER PURSUED.

On the same afternoon which witnessed the abduction of Clara Raymond by Osceola the Seminole, it will be remembered that she saw a signal made to her from the top of the light-house.

Hugh Havens, almost from the moment of his arrival there from the Haunted Lake, had employed himself in scanning the cabin of Bob, on the lookout for a sight of the lady who now reigned so undisputedly in his affections.

"If I can not be with her, I can feast my eyes upon a sight of her beautiful self," was his reflection, as he turned the telescope in that direction. "Whimsical as is Buster Bob, he surely can not begrudge me that privilege."

Uncle Lige, without telling what had happened on the previous night to one of the Seminoles, whom he found prowling about his home, took his departure and left the young man alone for several hours, so that he was free to use the telescope as much as he chose, without any one questioning his particular purpose.

He saw Clara paddle up the lake in her canoe, and he scarcely took his eyes from her, while she sat engaged in pulling in the fish, but, by aid of the powerful microscope, he was enabled to watch almost every movement that she made, even to that of placing the bait upon her hook.

When she landed, and he saw the Indian issue from the wood and meet her upon the beach, it may well be supposed that he was not a little alarmed; for there was something in the incident which brought up the name of Osceola, and although he knew nothing of the celebrated chief, yet he felt certain, almost at the first glance that it was he and no one else.

He was uneasy we say at what he saw, and yet he hardly suspected that his beloved was in any danger of being carried away. He knew, or rather suspected, that the red-skin was in love with her, for the only wonder to him was, why everybody who had once met her was not in the same fix; but his idea of the savage was such as to preclude the fear of her abduction.

He never once moved the glass while the two were conversing, and he felt that if there was such a thing as drawing near sound so that he might overhear the words uttered, he would not have refused to give a goodly sum for it, for he was jealous that any one but he should monopolize the sweet music of her voice.

"I am banished like a prisoner to this castle," he growled, "while that red-skin is permitted to stand on the beach and chat like a lover to her. Ah! they propose to indulge in a little boat-ride. He knows how to handle the paddle and canoe better than I do, and no doubt she will be captivated with his style."

It was rather aggravating—laugh as we may—to see the red-skin assume charge of the canoe, and row out upon the lake, the lady in the meanwhile leaning back in the stern, as though the ride was very pleasant and agreeable to her. It was provoking to see him in such company, when Hugh had deprived himself of it in deference to the whimsical and unreasonable request of Bob, and our hero was disposed to blame himself for it.

Hugh was roused from his somewhat misanthropic condition of mind, when under the hope of attracting the eye of the maid, he waved his hat from the look-out, and saw it almost instantly returned, proving that her gaze was turned in that direction.

"She sees me! she sees me!" he exclaimed, as with another swing of his hat, he placed it upon his head, and caught up the telescope. "She has not forgotten me altogether, even when in the presence of the king of the Seminoles!"

But what meant that signal which now followed? His heart stood almost still as he recognized the beckoning motion of Clara Raymond, clearly intended as an appeal to him to come to her assistance. Could it be that she was already a prisoner?

These questions were instantly answered; for the repetition of the gestures upon the part of the girl, the evident reproof of the chief, and then his rapid paddling for shore—all this followed in such rapid succession as to leave not a particle of doubt in his mind.

"The infamous wretch is running away with her!" he exclaimed, in great excitement, and, catching up his gun, he went leaping and plunging down-stairs at such a furious rate, that the light-house trembled from top to bottom. But a few minutes were required to reach the ground, but here a vexatious delay occurred from the fact that he found the door fastened, and he was without the means of opening it. For about half an hour Hugh was almost frantic, as he strove desperately at the ponderous structure, and then fortunately his torment was ended by the appearance of Lige upon the outside, who quickly opened the door and inquired what under the sun was the cause of all the trouble.

Hugh lost little time in explaining the terrible incident he had witnessed, and then made ready to rush away in mad pursuit, when Lige caught his arm and checked him for the instant.

"Hold on! have you got your powder, ball, wadding and everything, my boy?"

"Of course I have; don't restrain me, Lige; too much valuable time has been lost already. Can't you go with me?"

The old light-house keeper stood a moment, as if debating with himself, and then shook his head.

"You won't have no trouble in follering the two, 'cause they won't bother to hide their trail; but, if you don't fetch her in by to-morrow mornin', then I will take a hand in the business. I've only one word of advice to give you, my boy. Do you want to hear it?"

"Of course; let me have it Lige."

"That 'ere Osceola is the biggest scamp unhung. I never liked him, and he never liked me. The first sight you get of him, jest bore him through and through with a bullet. You'll be doing a service to your country and to mankind."

"I wish the opportunity were given me now," said Hugh, as with compressed lips he hurried away and plunged into the woods.

Realizing how much time he had lost by the tormenting delay at the door of the light-house, Hugh Havens now sought to recover all that was possible, and breaking into a run, he headed straight for Haunted Lake, so as to take up and follow the trail. Fortunately, he was guided to the direct spot, upon coming in sight of the canoe, which still rested upon the beach, precisely as it had been left by Osceola, when he fled in such haste with the "Magnolia of the Forest." Evidently he had no fear of pursuit, and took no pains to destroy the revelations of the course he had taken with his prize.

Hugh Havens was no professional in the trailing business, and had Osceola adopted the ordinary precautions which were at his command, there is no doubt but what he could have baffled the young hotspur, even with his companion; but not having thought of such a thing, Hugh found it a matter of comparative ease to trace them over the leaves, and through the bushes and undergrowth, where they had left the most palpable evidences of their flight. Occasionally the ground was found to be moist and soft, and in all such places the imprint of Osceola's moccasins and the delicate indentations of the maiden's shoes were always visible.

The young man, however, soon discovered that it was impossible to follow the trail with anything like the speed upon which he had counted, as in keeping too close a scrutiny upon it, he frequently delayed his progress while there were occasional portions of the woods, where it necessitated the sharpest search and attention upon his part, in order to prevent him losing the track altogether and himself at the same time.

Still he was able to move faster than did Osceola, and although he had no means of judging of the fact, he was actually and steadily gaining upon the two. His determination remained the same to shoot the chieftain upon sight, and, at any time during the pursuit, had he caught a glimpse of the couple, there is no doubt but that Osceola would have per-

ished ignominiously in the woods, as he was doomed to die a few years later in the prison at Savannah; but the exasperated pursuer saw no signs of him, until just before sunset, when he was not a little astonished by coming upon the dead panther, slashed and cut and mangled in such a manner as to show that he had died in some terrific fight, with an adversary that must have possessed immense strength.

Hugh's first supposition was that there had been a struggle between two beasts, but the absence of the second, and other signs, indicated that Osceola had slain the brute, by the aid of rifle and knife, getting away without injuring himself so far as the signs went.

From this point the real trouble of Hugh Havens began. The clawing and scratching of the ground threw him off the trail, and the gathering gloom in the woods made it impossible for him to recover it. Several times, after a most diligent search, he thought he had found it, but it was lost again before he had gone a dozen yards, and he was compelled to admit the truth, that henceforward he must go precisely as the fair fugitive herself was going—by pure conjecture.

At this juncture, Hugh ascended a slight hill, and to his surprise caught sight of two Indians but a short distance away, one of whom he instantly recognized as Osceola. The young man was just in time to leap back behind the trees and thus save himself from discovery, while he stealthily peered out and watched their movements.

These, to say the least, were exceedingly remarkable. Both were in the act of directing an enormous bloodhound to something upon the earth, and at the very moment Hugh looked, he shot away in the woods like a thunderbolt.

"That means that they have put the brute upon her track," exclaimed the appalled lover, with a wonderful perception of the state of things. Osceola has come across that other devil, and has borrowed his dog to find Clara, who must have run away during the fight with the panther."

All this was true, and our hero was wondering whether he could not get the two precious wretches in such a range as to puncture them both with the same ball, when Osceola vanished like a flash in pursuit of his dog, and the other red-skin deliberately walked away in another direction, the course taken leading him quite close to where Hugh himself stood.

The latter waited only long enough to make sure he was beyond hearing, when he started on a run, after Osceola, fully resolved that if such a thing were within the range of human possibility, he should take a hand in the impending business.

The gathering gloom made all attempt at keeping the trail out of the question; but the steady yelping of the bloodhound served very well as a guide, and by following this, he was quite confident that he was close upon his heels.

Had Hugh been a little closer, this noise of the brute would have enabled him to reach the tree where Clara had taken refuge, as soon therefore as did Osceola; but it will be recalled by our readers that it ceased upon the coming up of its new master, and this placed him all at sea again.

He passed the entire night in wandering back and forth, sometimes actually going within a hundred feet of where the fugitive maiden was perched, and yet never knowing it. Great as was the temptation, he dared not call her name, for that would be certain to insure his death at the hands of the wily Osceola; and so the rising of the sun found him wandering through the forest with an anxiety as eager and unabated as that of the bloodhound himself.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LIGHT-HOUSE.

WHEN Clara Raymond found that after all her trial and suffering and effort—after her hope and despair—after her flight and long start, she had wandered directly back into the hands of Osceola, and that all this labor and hardship was to pass for naught, she started backward with her hands to her forehead and gasped:

"Oh, Heaven! why hast thou forsaken me?"

Something in the wild appearance of the girl, as she uttered this wail, caused the Seminole to pause when several feet distant, and stare rather wonderingly at her, as if he did not precisely understand the cause of her emotion.

"Osceola!" she moaned, waving him off with her hand, "go away and leave me! Let me never see you again!"

"Osceola will never leave the Magnolia of the Forest!" he replied, his black eyes gleaming with evil passion; "she shall go to his wigwam, she shall be his squaw, and shall become Queen of the Seminoles—"

He suddenly paused, for a slight rustling caught his ear, and turning his head, he saw about a rod distant the figure of Hugh Havens standing like a statue, with his rifle raised, his finger upon the trigger, and the muzzle pointing directly at the heart of the Seminole.

"Stir a hand or foot and I pull the trigger," said the young man in a voice of deadly earnestness; "a hair's more pressure, and the end of Osceola has come. I have followed you many miles, with the determination to shoot you upon sight. I am tempted now to do so, and but give me a pretext by the slightest motion toward raising your hand that holds that gun, or an appeal to that black devil crouching alongside of you, and that moment will be your last."

There was indeed danger from the bloodhound that, couchant at the feet of Osceola, looked at the new-comer as if in doubt what his particular duty

was in the new phase affairs had taken; but he would not stir without an order from his master and so he sat still.

Clara recognized the new-comer at a glance, and clasping her hands and looking to heaven, she uttered a fervent prayer of thankfulness, and in her excess of delight, was about to rush forward and greet one who she now felt had indeed become nearer and dearer than a friend, when she comprehended the critical condition of matters, and saw what a fatal disturbance such a movement might make.

Accordingly she stood back and watched, with an intensity of soul-yearning interest, which no pen can describe.

Historians and biographers have differed about the bravery of Osceola, the leader of the Seminoles in the Florida war, although the evidence is upon the side of his courage; but there has never been any question, so far as we know, about his cunning shrewdness and his disposition to make the best possible of a bad speculation.

On the present occasion he saw that he was caught just as fairly and completely as if surrounded by a regiment of United States soldiers, and he was too fond of life to throw it away by any rash movement upon his part.

He stood motionless as the tree-trunk beside him, assuming a sort of paralysis of fear that he really did not feel, and on the look-out for some mistake upon the part of his foe that would give him the upper hand; but none came.

"Drop that gun," commanded Hugh, "on this instant, or I fire!"

The rifle fell with a dull thump at his feet.

"And that tomahawk at your belt! Withdraw that and let it fall without your stooping!"

Thump! and that lay beside the other.

"There is still a knife! you may as well relieve yourself of that also. Out with it quick! Devil take you! why am I such a fool as to show you this mercy?"

Even Osceola asked himself the same question as he promptly obeyed the commands of his master.

When certain that his inveterate foe stood entirely unarmed, Hugh Havens called out:

"Now leave, and be thankful that I had no more sense than to permit you to go. Stand not on the order of your going."

The Seminole began retreating, walking backward with his face toward his conqueror, while the bloodhound lumbered slowly along like a bewildered ox, as if uncertain to whom he belonged.

Osceola had gone but a short distance in this manner, when by some means or other he managed to cause the dog to understand the situation, and the latter made a tremendous plunge straight at Havens, with his huge mouth distended ready to tear him to pieces.

But a cool head and a steady nerve, and the next moment the black demon turned a double summer-set, with a bullet clean through his skull.

To Clara Raymond belongs the credit of defeating a well-laid scheme of her foe, that now came terribly nigh succeeding.

The instant the hound started for Havens, Osceola started for his rifle, which still lay upon the ground some distance away; but the maiden was much nigher than he, and detected his purpose at its very inception. Like a fawn, she made a dash for it, and catching it up, she had it pointed at the Indian when he was yet several feet distant.

The Seminole paused and glared at her, while an expression of diabolical hate transformed his handsome face into that of a demon incarnate. Muttering something in his own tongue he turned on his heel, and the next instant had vanished like a shadow in the wood.

Turning about, Clara saw Hugh Havens standing at her elbow with his gun resting idly by his side, while with a strange smile, and a deep, yearning look, his eyes were fixed upon her.

Thus the two stood for several seconds, gazing straight into each other's countenance without uttering a word, and then the next moment they understood each other.

"Clara! my own loved Clara!"

And as the young lover opened his arms, the maiden with a low cry of joy rushed into them, and he strained her to his breast, kissing the beautiful forehead and the warm cheeks, calling her by pet names and endearing expressions, while in the pure delight of the moment both forgot the terribly trying scenes through which they had so recently passed and the peril which still hung, and for some time to come must impend over their heads.

That one common bond and danger—that instinctive perception of what he had done for her sake, cleared away all the mists from her eyes, and Clara saw him as her own true, brave chivalrous lover, that was ready to yield up his life for her sake, and she could no longer keep back the emotions of her own breast, that from the first had gone out in vague yearnings toward him.

When she recovered herself, and the blushing girl gently released the embrace of her lover, she stood away a few feet and looked fondly at him, while the tears filled her eyes, as she asked, in a low voice:

"How can I ever thank you for this, Hugh?"

"By giving me encouragement to hope that the love I have held from the moment I first saw you, shall be sometime returned," he replied, advancing and taking her two hands in his own.

"I cannot do that," she responded, with a sweet smile, "for you have already won my heart. What maiden could refuse her lover, after such a proof of devotion as you have given?"

"A thousand-fold have I been repaid," he added, indulging in the lover's privilege of taking the hundredth kiss. "I thank Heaven that it ever permit-

ted me to meet you; but are we not forgetting that we are still in the woods? Osceola, I take it, will consider himself bound to settle this score with me, while he is altogether too fond of you, to give you up without another struggle to get you into his power."

"That he did hold an affection for me I cannot doubt," said Clara, in a low voice; "but within the last few minutes, it has turned to hate. Henceforth, he is my bitter enemy."

"Who cares? But it will be prudent to place as great a distance as possible between us and him; for I think he will stumble upon some of his tribe somewhere in this neighborhood, and will do all he can to make things even. Come on, then, if you feel able to walk rapidly."

The poor girl had suffered a great deal, and showed it in her appearance. It was not the loss of sleep, nor the deprivation of food so much as it was the long-continued strain to which her system had been subjected; but she was plucky and courageous, and she expressed her eagerness to spend the entire day in tramping, provided it led her toward home.

As they started away, Hugh picked up the rifle which Osceola had left upon the ground, first flinging the other weapons some distance away in the woods, so that he could not recover them in case he returned, and then they rapidly left the spot.

It was useless to attempt to follow any particular course that might strike them as the true one, and they wisely determined to disregard their impressions in this respect (which scarcely once in a thousand instances are correct) and to make every effort to discover the direction of the Gulf of Mexico, the beach being the only safe point at which they could aim.

Fortunately there was scarcely a breath of air stirring, and after bending their heads and listening for several minutes, they were able to detect the steady hollow roar of the surging waves, as they came faintly to them through the many miles of intervening forest.

"It cannot be in that direction," said the amazed Clara. "It must be off yonder," she added, pointing directly toward the Atlantic.

"And it seems to me that there is the proper course to follow to reach it," laughed her lover.

"You know how liable one is to go astray when in the woods, as we are, and our only safe course is to carry out the idea we expressed some moments ago of paying no heed to such impressions, knowing that the Gulf of Mexico, beyond a doubt, holds the same position that it did a few years ago."

Clara could not but admit the truth of this, and they resumed their flight, aiming directly for the sea-coast, as it was indicated to them by the murmuring roar to which we have already referred.

Precisely how far away it was, it was impossible for either to conjecture—as it might be that the dense forest, and a wind blowing off-shore, so deadened the "eternal base" of the mighty waters as to prevent it extending any great distance inland; but judging from the time occupied by both in reaching this spot, they felt certain of reaching the beach before nightfall, provided no unexpected interruption occurred.

It is not to be supposed that two fellow-travelers like these, in the very flush and heyday of young love, should permit their tongues to be idle as they journeyed along side by side. Despite their weariness of body, they were happy in each other's society, and conversed as cheerily as ever did lovers when seated in moonlit bower.

They exchanged experiences, and when Hugh came to tell how it was that he had absented himself from her society on the preceding day, there was no escaping the conclusion that Bob had planned the interview between Osceola and Clara, making the arrangements with the chief, so that no one should be in the way to interfere with him.

"Why should he have done so, and thus bring the terrible danger upon the unprepared maiden?"

This was the question that both considered, and the answer to which they at last agreed.

Buster Bob, as he was termed, was an ardent friend to the whites, and desirous of benefiting them in some way in the bitter war that had already raged for some time. Osceola must have pledged him that if the "Magnolia of the Forest" would consent to be his queen, he would end the war; and the simple-hearted Bob, actually hoped that such a thing could be arranged, but he did not consent that they should meet, until the chief had given his promise that he would use no violence toward the maiden; and Indian-like he had violated his promise, and acted in the unwarranted manner with which our readers are familiar.

No harm will be done, just at this point, by stating that this conjecture of the lovers was the actual truth. Bob, in the simplicity of his heart, actually hoped that the manly, handsome appearance of Osceola, his chivalrous manner, would make such an impression upon the heart of Clara Raymond, that she would give him encouragement, and the chieftain would thus check the war that was raging between the whites and his people, stop the effusion of blood, and inaugurate a glorious and happy peace. Even should he fail, matters could be placed in no worse position than before, as he had no suspicion that Osceola would break his pledged word in the high-handed manner which he afterward did. But for his absolute faith in his Indian friend, the really kind-hearted Bob would never have permitted the meeting between the two. As it was, he was taught a lesson which he never forgot.

Shortly after the departure of Hugh Havens in his pursuit of Clara and her abductor, Bob made his appearance at the light-house, with the purpose of revealing to Lige the scheme by which he hoped

to accomplish so much good. Before he could make known the exceedingly foolish thing that he had done, he learned the astounding truth of what Osceola had done.

There never had been any particular affinity between these two men, but the peril of the girl, whom both regarded with such affection, made them one in feeling, and they agreed at once to pursue and recapture her.

It being in the afternoon, Lige lit his lamp, knowing that it would burn through the night into the next day, without further attention, and the two started off together, with the deep, quiet resolution of men who are resolved that nothing shall turn them aside from the work they have laid out for themselves. Both were accustomed to the woods, and but for their delay in taking the trail, and an unexpected check in the shape of a war-party of Seminoles, that were still hovering in the neighborhood (despite Osceola's declaration to the contrary) these two would have come upon the scene as soon as Hugh. But the long detour and search caused by that obstruction occupied them until nightfall, when, of course, the trail could not be recovered, and they were compelled to lie by until daylight. And leaving them to continue their pursuit, we must return from our digression and follow the lovers upon their eventful journey.

As the two advanced, in the sweet communion of love, discoursing of the past, and picturing the radiant future, they observed that the dull, hollow sound, that had so faintly fallen upon their ears at first, slowly but steadily increased in volume, proving that they were pursuing the right direction and that they had only to persevere to reach the shore, when their progress would be easy and secure until they should reach the light-house, where, after all, they believed they would be more secure than with Bob in his cabin, since, as Osceola had already broken his pledged word, it was not to be supposed that he would be restrained by any consideration from wreaking his revenge both upon Hugh and upon her who had shown her dislike to him so unmistakably.

"No words of gentleness and love will ever be heard from him," laughed Clara. "Should we ever meet, it will be with as bitter a hatred toward me as he holds against you."

"I don't think he can hate any human being more than he does me," returned Hugh, seriously. "I am afraid that he will hunt up some of his warriors that must be at no great distance, and with them follow us to our refuge in the light-house."

"And by that time, I hope father will be in sight with his steamer, and when we once leave this country, we will defer a return until matters are more quiet. I have seen and experienced enough to answer for some time to come."

Near the middle of the afternoon the lovers were able to hear the thunderous boom of the waves upon the beach with such distinctness that they were certain that they were near at hand, and an hour later, they emerged from the woods, and, to their great delight, found themselves standing upon the hard, sandy beach, with the foam-capped billows curling over and chasing each other, up to their very feet. Quite a gale was blowing, and the breakers were higher than usual—but as they looked off to the westward over the blue Gulf, they detected a sail here and there, but none within several miles of land.

"I see nothing of father's steamer," said Clara, who had been scanning the horizon; "it is perhaps too soon, but I still had hope that he might be as anxious to see me as I am to see him, and would make a little extra speed upon his return."

"Yonder is something less pleasing to the eye only than that."

As Hugh spoke, he pointed to the southward, where, white, clear and distinctly outlined, could be seen the light house against the blue sky beyond. It was hard to judge its distance, but it must have been several miles. The sight encouraged the two, and bathing their faces and hands in the cool waters of the Gulf, they walked more readily and easily upon the hard sandy beach, purposely stepping so far down that the ever-returning waves effaced their tracks the next instant; but they gave over this precaution after a short time, well knowing that if their enemies followed their trail to the seashore, there would be no need of examining it further to ascertain whither they had gone.

It was a wearisome walk along the shore, the light-house seeming to recede as they advanced, and the sun was again low in the sky when they at last reached the base of the tower, pretty thoroughly used up from the long tramp they had had through the woods.

They had observed while some distance away that the lamp was burning, although quite dimly, and recalling what Lige had said, Hugh concluded that he had lit it in the morning, and then gone off on his hunt after them, uncertain of the time he should return.

"Now, how are we to obtain entrance?" said the young man, pausing before the ponderous door. "Lige never taught me the secret of opening it."

"He showed it to me, when I was here before," said Clara, "although he may not recollect it himself. Now let me teach it to you."

Whereupon the maiden made several jerks and pulls upon projecting corners here and there, showing a huge knob in all sorts of odd ways, and at last the two passed in and secured the great door behind them, so firmly that no one unless he possessed the secret could enter.

By the time they had reached the uppermost story, they were so exhausted as to be able scarcely to stand. First eating some food, that Lige seemed to have left on purpose for them, Clara went to the

little narrow apartment, where she flung herself upon her bed, and sunk into a deep slumber, which lasted for several hours, and which acted as a restorative to her wearied frame.

When she awoke, the moon was shining in the little window, and arranging her toilet as well as she could, she passed up to the look-out, where she found that Hugh had trimmed the lamp, which was now burning brightly, while he sat there patiently awaiting her coming. He arose, and tenderly embracing her, gave her a seat, while he stood beside her.

In answer to her queries, he said that it was near midnight; that he had been awake but a short time himself, and had seen nor heard anything of either Lige or Bob. Quite a stiff breeze was blowing, making the temperature cool and delightful; but a few drifting, ragged clouds that continually straggled over the face of the full moon, made the light treacherous and uncertain, as often shutting out the ocean and forest from their view as it disclosed them to their vision.

Clara had sat down but a minute when she arose again, and said to her lover:

"You seem to be uneasy and disturbed over something. Has any thing occurred to alarm you? Don't keep it from me, dear Hugh."

"I may as well admit," he replied, with some hesitation, "that I am considerably alarmed. I am anxious about the continued absence of Lige. If he started in pursuit of us this morning—but I will not speculate about him. I do not wish to startle you, dearest Clara, but I believe that Osceola and a band of Seminoles are at the bottom of the light-house!"

The maiden would not have been human, had she not been startled at these tidings, and stepping to the railing, she leaned over and looked down the giddy height. Her companion cautioned her about showing herself to some of the Indians who might be disposed to fire at her, but they were beneath the rays of light thrown out by the reflector overhead, and consequently in deeper shadow, so that they really were safer from observation than if there were none there at all.

Just as the maiden looked over the balcony, the moonlight streamed from behind a cloud, and peering down intently for a full minute, she stepped back with the exclamation:

"Yes; Osceola and twenty Indians at least are there, and we are lost!"

"Let us hope for the best," replied Hugh, also peering over into the gloom, feeling at the same time there was very little ground for hope. "I see a light out upon the Gulf, which looks as if it might come from your father's steamer."

Clara turned her head as quick as a flash, and looked out over the waves to where two lights, separated by a distance of fifty feet or so, could be seen sinking and rising with the waves, showing that they were upon a large vessel which was gradually standing in toward land.

"I think that it is," she said, rather hesitatingly, "but I cannot be certain until he gives a signal, which he always does when he wishes to make himself known. It seems to me that he is about the right distance to do so now. It is he! it is he!" suddenly added the girl, clapping her hands with delight, as she saw the bluish color suddenly move round and round in a circle, as if it were held in the hand and rapidly revolved over a person's head. "That is my dear father's signal that he is coming! He will stand off-shore until daylight, and then send a boat to take us off."

"Why will he not land during the darkness?" asked Hugh, who felt the more uneasy at the approach of the steamer.

"He is cautious, and I know must have heard something that alarmed him at Tampa, as he has hurried back, and he will not permit one of his boats to land here in the night without some signal from uncle Lige that all is well. Such a signal you know can not be given."

"Would to God it could!" was the fervent ejaculation of Hugh, who was sensible of a growing uneasiness such as sometimes comes over one the moment before some impending calamity breaks upon his head. The absence of Bob and Lige, the known presence of the Seminoles below—their silence—not the slightest sound reaching his ears from them; all these seemed ominous of coming ill.

But all the interest of Clara Raymond was now centered upon the steamer that was slowly forging along, as if merely seeking to keep her position within hail, until the opportunity should come for communicating with those on shore.

She was gazing off in the darkness in this manner, when she heard her lover groan:

"My God! THE LIGHT-HOUSE IS ON FIRE!"

CHAPTER XII. CONCLUSION.

It was an awful, blood-curdling discovery, such as no pen can depict and no imagination conceive! Hugh Havens, in looking over the railing that bounded the look-out upon the top of the light-house, saw the whole lower portion of the structure bursting into flame. Already the hot, furnace-like breath reached them in their eyrie, and they felt it against their cheeks.

Osceola might now dance over the revenge he had obtained. Spurned by the lady whom he had loved, his venomous hate could now gratify itself to the full by the sight of her roasting between earth and sky, ay! burning to death in the arms of him who had heaped such gross indignity upon him! They should howl with torment while he went mad with glee.

By some means or other the Seminoles had secured entrance to the lower part of the cabin, where finding their way barred by another heavy door

which they could not open, they began and completed their preparation for a piece of characteristic enjoyment. The whole lower portion was crammed with dried brush and limbs, this was ignited and the door closed, while they drew off into the woods to howl and jump, and screech and yell, and cut up all sorts of antics in their delirium of bliss.

The thunderstruck Clara Raymond leaned over the balcony and looked down. She saw the fire flaming and bursting out from every part of the basement, and raging with a fury that would have required a Niagara to check it. The light-house was doomed beyond any possibility of mortal help!

As she stood thus, she felt her hand taken by some one, and turning her head saw Hugh standing by her side.

"We can meet death together," said he, calmly; "it will be sweet for me to die in your company."

"Is there no escape?" she asked, as with a shudder, she hid her face upon his shoulder; "it will be hard for father to see me die such a death as this, and to reflect that if he had only come a little sooner, I should have been saved!"

"Can we not escape by leaping out into the water?" suddenly asked Hugh, looking down into the gloom, where he could see the caps of the waves as they rolled upon the beach. "If there is enough depth, it might break our fall."

"No, no," wailed Clara; "the tide is running out, and the utmost leap that we could make, would only take us to the edge of the water, where the sand is packed as hard as a rock. No, no, we must die together. Would that I could kiss my dear father before I bid him farewell. How I wish that he had not come at this time."

And she turned her white face toward the sea again, where she noted that the steamer was working still closer in to shore.

"It will be more preferable to die by water than by fire," said Hugh, every particle of hope having been extinguished in his breast. "We will wait here until we can stand it no longer, and then clasp hands and spring as far outward as possible. We shall strike shallow water, and perish the instant we strike, but death will be quick and almost painless compared to what will be our fate if we remain here."

"I am not certain about that," replied Clara, speaking with wonderful calmness; "this will become such a mass of embers, and so intensely heated that death will be as instantaneous. It is meet, dear Hugh, that at such a time as this, our dying moments should be spent in communion with God. Let us pass to the room below, where we shall not be seen by Osceola and those who are watching, and there we will try and forget every thing else, but that we are so soon to make our leap into the other world."

The two descended the few steps into the apartment immediately below, where a small lamp was burning, illuminating the few square yards of space. As Clara cast her mournful look about the apartment, her eyes rested upon the package which Bob had brought there several days before, and which leaned in the corner just as he had left it.

"There!" she exclaimed, pointing to the object; "do you remember that?"

"I never thought of it until this moment," he replied, walking to where it stood, and taking it in his hand; "it can be of no use to us now, but I will examine it. Hello! here is a piece of paper folded and placed in the top."

As he spoke, he unfolded the missive and walked to the lamp. He saw that the writing was in pencil, and in a large, bold hand, that was as easy to read as if it were print.

These were the words he read in a loud voice:

"TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN, GREETING:

"This is to say that I have every reason to fear and have had reason for so thinking for weeks past that a party of Seminole Indians, incited thereto by their chief Osceola, have in contemplation the burning of this light-house, and I am greatly concerned for the safety of those who may be in the structure at that critical time. If so be, the incendiaries will begin the fire at the base, and as fire ascends upward, the moment the fuel is ignited all escape will be cut off downward; and even were it possible for one to make his way down through the flames, the most obtuse intellect must see that it would be in vain, as it would only precipitate him into the arms of the howling red-skins, who would toss him back into the flames, and then dance with fiendish delight. Should the envied wretch attempt to leap into the sea, the depth is so shallow that immediate death would result. The question then arises, if a man or woman should be caught in this dreadful strait, is there any prospect of earthly escape?"

"I think there is, provided such persons are good swimmers, and that the light-house is fired at night, and the instrument which I have brought here to be kept in reserve for such an emergency, I have constructed with great care for such purpose. You will see that it is a huge parachute or umbrella. The moment the fire in the base is discovered, and before it has had time to make much of an illumination, let him or them spread the parachute, grasp the handle firmly and leap as far out in the sea as possible. The parachute will let you down without injury into the water, and the instant you touch you must let go and strike out from shore, making as long a dive as you can, and then swim away from land until you are out of sight of the Seminoles, and keep on down the coast until it is safe to land. The surf here is not dangerous, and the Indians, not expecting such a ruse, will be unprepared for it, and you will therefore have the greater chance of success."

"Jump at once, and God protect you!"

"ROBERT BUSH."

"What do you think of it?" asked the astounded Clara, when the reading was finished.

"Let me examine it first," replied Hugh, as he carefully unfolded and found it to be a huge, firmly-made umbrella, spreading a thick sail of canvas fully eight feet in diameter. "It is made as he says, and I doubt not will land us safely in the water. Can you swim, Clara?"

"Not a stroke."

"Fortunately I am a powerful swimmer, and I can support you in the water. Let us try it."

"But we cannot comply with one of the conditions he prescribes. The base and many feet above is one mass of flame, throwing out an illumination that will be seen for miles, and that makes it as light as day for a long distance surrounding us. The Seminoles are close at hand, and will be upon us the moment we strike."

"I hope not. All you will have to do will be to cling to me, and I will strike straight for your father's steamer, calling to him for help. There, don't you feel the structure tremble? It can stand but a few moments longer."

"I can feel the heat, and it is doomed, as I fear we are!"

"Will you make the one effort for life, dearest Clara? Think of your parent so close at hand, and do it for his sake if not for your own and me. Will you not make the effort with me?"

"I will, Hugh."

"Quick, then, for time is precious! We must leap from the balcony!"

In an instant they had reached the highest point of the light-house, the look-out, where the lamp was burning. The young man reached up, extinguished the light, and then spreading out the parachute, stepped carefully upon the railing, where he balanced himself, and assisted his companion up beside him.

Side by side, they stood for an instant, while he gave her his last instructions.

"I will cling to the handle with both hands. Lock your arm within mine, and hold it with the grip of death. Just before we strike the water, take a long breath, and then avoid struggling or throwing your arms about my neck. Do not attempt to help yourself at all, but remain perfectly quiescent, and I will keep you afloat. Are you ready?"

"In an instant; wait until I can commend our souls to God, and send up a prayer for my dear father!"

It was an awful moment, and they stood thus at that great elevation, suspended between heaven and earth, while the brave girl closed her eyes in a short, fervent prayer to the only One who could carry them through this unparalleled ordeal.

Hugh did the same, and for a second nothing was heard but the roar and dash of the breakers, sounding strange and far off, and the rush and swirl of the flames leaping upward like flaming serpents, hastening to catch and intercept the victims that were about to leap from their grasp, and cheat them of the torment they were seeking to give them.

Only a few seconds, and Clara said in a low, firm voice:

"I am ready."

"Leap out as far as you can! Together! Now!"

Down, down, down through the whizzing air, the strange parachute descended, like a collapsed balloon, seemingly with no abated speed, and carrying the two who were clinging to it to certain destruction with the speed of a meteor. It was such an awful ordeal, that Clara resolutely kept her eyes closed, endeavoring to her utmost to retain possession of her faculties and to remember the advice given her by her lover to carry out the instructions he had given her.

Two invaluable points were gained in this descent. The inflation of the parachute moderated the descent of the two just enough to take away the certainty of death, while at the same time it permitted the two to strike the water without losing their perpendicular position, thereby saving them from that fatal shock to the system, which so frequently attends the exhibitions of daring divers.

Just as Clara felt the waters close around her, she inhaled a spasmodic breath, and the next instant both were beneath the surface, freed from the friendly parachute, and struggling against a new enemy. The depth was so slight that both, however, paused until they struck the sandy bottom with considerable force; but upon plunging upward and striking out, Hugh Havens was gratified beyond measure to find that he was not injured in the least, but having the free use of his limbs, he began using them with all the skill and power at his command.

"Help! help! Captain Raymond. I have your daughter here! Come to her rescue at once!"

This was the cry that went over the waves, as turning his face toward the black hull of the steamer, and supporting the girl with his left arm, he exerted himself with all the strength at his command to buffet the billows and carry himself and the one dearer to him than his own life, further away from the inhospitable shore.

By this time the light-house was one vast blazing pile, the flames streaming far upward in the air above the look-out, and making objects as distinctly visible, for hundreds of yards in every direction, as if beneath the noonday sun. The long, curving beach, with the curling foam gliding far up over the sand—the dark background of woods—the black hull of the steamer, and the clouds above—all these clearly reflected the livid red glow, and took upon themselves a ghastly, supernatural color, that made the scene seem as if it belonged to another world rather than to this.

And this same lurid glow showed still more. The steamer could be seen forging in closer and closer to the shore, the distance already being dangerously slight, while a small boat, full of men, were rowing

with the fury of desperation toward the struggling swimmers. From the woods, at the rear of the blazing light-house, over twenty Seminole Indians swarmed forth, yelling and screeching and flocking down to the beach, like so many demons.

Osceola, in common with the others, had observed the flight of the strange-looking object, with the two persons clinging to it, and, quicker in intellect than his companions, he suspected its meaning at once. He had observed, too, the steamer standing off-shore, and he suspected its mission.

He saw that after all there was danger of losing his coveted triumph. That which, in his demoniacal nature he had counted upon as the sweetest enjoyment of his life, the burning to death of the two whom he hated above all others, bid fair to turn into just the opposite, and there seemed a probability of his victims escaping his malignant persecution.

The very danger which Hugh Havens dreaded, he was now called upon to combat. He was such a short distance from the shore, and the waves were driving in with such power, that although moderate enough to be overcome by a good swimmer, when he had nothing else to fight, were yet too strong for him to master, when given but the use of one arm, while the other was fully occupied in keeping the head of Clara Raymond above water, preventing her from strangling.

He struggled and wrestled with all the might he could summon to his aid, sinking down in the trough of the sea, and then rising above the crest of the in-rolling wave; but, in spite of all this, he could see that slowly but steadily he was being washed in toward the shore, and that, instead of Osceola and his companions wading or swimming out, or even dispatching them with their guns, they had but to stand where they were to have the victims cast up by the sea to their very feet.

The Indians observed this, but they noted another fact also—the efforts of the steamer to effect the rescue of the two human beings struggling so desperately with the waves, and they saw that it was unsafe to wait.

And so a dozen clustered together and began wading out toward the heroic man, who seeing them coming again raised his voice:

"Help! help! quick! or we perish! We can sustain ourselves but a few minutes longer!"

A cheer—seemingly but a short distance away—broke upon their ear, and then the ringing voice of a sailor rose above the hellish din.

"A little longer, my brave fellow! We shall be there in a few seconds! Hold out until then and you shall be saved! Cheer up, Clara!"

The sound of this voice seemed to rouse Clara, who, following the advice of her lover, had remained quiescent until now. She started and struggled, so as to embarrass the sorely-taxed Hugh still more, and he besought her to cease.

"You will drown us both!" he said, as the water split into foam over their heads. "Keep quiet, for a short time longer."

"It was the voice of my father that I heard!" she said, her senses seeming to wander. "I heard him call my name! do not keep me from him. Father! father! wait for me, I am hurrying to you!"

And in her bewilderment she increased her struggles, so that Hugh was compelled to give over his efforts to swim off-shore, and to exert his whole strength toward keeping both afloat, leaving both at the mercy of the waves.

In a few minutes the swimmer had lost all the ground he had gained by his efforts to make his way toward the steamer, and less than a dozen feet separated the couple from the Indians, who were stealthily wading outward, and stretching forth their hands to clutch them back from their last desperate hope of life.

"Leap out, and catch them!" suddenly called Osceola, in his own tongue, from the shore where he was standing; "they will be gone in a minute! Lose not another instant."

Thus incited, the foremost red-skins plunged into the water, and there was a general clustering and concentrating together, as they closed in for the last final effort to catch the exhausted victims.

"Back, there, you red devils!"

And as the clear voice rung over the waters, it was followed by a dozen rattling discharges of rifles, by the frenzied screech of Indians, and half the coppery wretches in the water threw up their hands and disappeared, while several of the bullets, finding their way among the swarm on land, scattered death and consternation there, and with a howl of terror, rage and disappointment, Osceola and his companions broke for the woods, into which they vanished like so many frightened partridges. And those who were in the water, and still able to use their strength, struggled out with the mad haste of a group of bathers, upon the appearance of a man-eating shark about their legs. There was no resisting or halting, for the Philistines were upon them.

They had not yet reached the shelter of the forest when a bright flash was seen from the bow of the steamer, followed by a thunderous boom, and as the six-pounder went plowing its way up the beach, sending the brands and sparks of the burning light-house into millions of stars, and scattering them in every direction, the terror of the Seminoles could not have been increased, and they were gone almost in a second as it were.

None but those who had been slain remained, and among the first to disappear was Osceola, who was never seen again by any of the characters that figure in these pages. He was taken prisoner, and died some time after in Savannah.

Captain Raymond's boat reached Hugh Havens just in the nick of time. The poor fellow had indeed struggled heroically, but his strength had its limits, and he gave up entirely just as several powerful

hands grasped him by the collar and dragged him into the boat.

Clara was already senseless; but the instant she was within reach, the figure of a man, in the uniform of a captain in the American navy, and seated in the stern of the boat, leaned forward and outward, and lifted her tenderly from the water, clasping her in her dripping garments to his broad, manly breast, while he fondly kissed her again and again, like the parent who receives its child back from death into life again.

"My own darling daughter! God be thanked that we are not too late! Fear no more, for you are in father's arms!"

And as he bent his head over, with the tears streaming down his face, and repeatedly kissed his dear child, she murmured his name, and the lurid light that spread far out over the sea, showed a sweet, heavenly smile upon her features.

Tired, weary, worn—long persecuted and wandering—in perils without number and grasped by death itself—she had found safety at last. She was at rest in the arms of her father, and with the faith of the simple, trusting child, she felt that she had nothing more to fear.

Peace, rest—what a blessed balm. She felt that she could now die and be happy.

"Give way, boys!" said Captain Raymond, speaking to his men; "these two need immediate attention, or both may yet succumb! Confound the red-skins! I wish I dared to have given them the whole broadside."

The sailors rowed with vim, and a few minutes later, were at the side of the steamer.

Here they were assisted on board the vessel, and the surgeon gave them instant attention.

He announced to the anxious parent that his daughter only needed rest and nursing. Everything possible was done for them, and at the end of a couple of hours they began to rally, and the judicious treatment of the surgeon speedily placed both beyond any danger from the fearful trials to which their systems had been subjected, and by daylight both were able to walk about deck, a trifle weak, but cheerful and delighted as they received the congratulations of their friends.

The work of Captain Raymond was not yet finished, as he felt it his duty to remain off the coast, until some tidings of uncle Lige were gained. The light-house, which he had so faithfully attended for many long years, being totally destroyed, and his position being one of great peril, it was not to be supposed that he had any desire to remain longer.

About ten o'clock in the forenoon, the man on the look-out reported that a white person was standing on the beach, close to the debris of the light-house, waving his hat over his head as if endeavoring to attract their attention. Not doubting but that this was the individual whom they were seeking, a boat was at once lowered and put out to bring him off.

It proved to be the old man indeed, who was glad enough to get away from the sight of the melancholy ruins. He was about to start northward to Tampa, when he caught sight of the steamer, and suspected at once that it was waiting to communicate with him.

When the grim old veteran stepped upon the deck of the steamer, he received the welcome due such a hero, Captain Raymond ordering a cannon fired in his honor. As he clasped the hands of Hugh Havens and the little pet, Clara Raymond, his delight was so great that he seemed to renew his youth, and to become as frolicsome as a kitten.

The steamer now headed southward, her destination being around the Keys up to St. Augustine, where Lige was left to wait until a new light-house should be constructed for him, which was done in the course of twelve months thereafter.

Scotched and cheered by his pleasure voyage, old Lige forgot his gloom and reticence, and made some interesting statements, which it is proper that we should give our readers. After relating how he and Buster Bob were thrown off the trail by the war-party of Seminoles, he stated that they found out the next morning that a number of the same red-skins were in pursuit of them, and, although Bob felt little fear regarding his own personal safety, yet he stuck by Lige, and they were kept busily employed during the entire day in dodging and eluding their enemies. When darkness came, they started for the sea-coast, and were several miles distant at the time the fire broke out. Suspecting that Hugh and Clara were there they hastened thither, but did not reach the spot until long after everything was over. They had noticed the proximity of the steamer, and heard the firing of the rifles and the cannon. Bob explained the *parachute* matter, but they had little hope of any good resulting from it, and Lige went through the woods with Bob to his cabin, where he remained till morning, when the hermit learned from a Seminole Indian that the lovers had actually escaped, and gotten off upon the vessel after their wonderful leap from the top of the burning structure.

Bob chose to remain where he was, and bidding him good-by, Lige came down to the sea-shore, and was taken off in the manner already mentioned.

One mystery—that of the Haunted Lake—still remained to perplex the lovers.

"And that I think will never be cleared up," remarked Hugh, as he and Clara and her father sat chatting with the old man one beautiful moonlight night, as they were steaming up the Atlantic coast of Florida.

"It is a mystery indeed," said the maiden. "I never saw or heard of anything which has perplexed me as much as that. There must be something supernatural about it, laugh at it as we may."

"You are childish to be humbugged in that

style," laughed the captain. "You ought to have gone right up to it upon first sight, and made a critical examination, and my word for it, you would have found it some clever trick of some wag."

It was noticed at this point that uncle Lige had hard work to restrain his merriment. Finally he exploded in such boisterous good-humor that it was some time before he could command his words. Finally he spoke:

"Wal, I s'pose I may as well tell you 'bout that 'ere spook. The captain here says that if you'd paddled up to the canoe, and looked into the matter a little closer, you'd have found a humbug. Can't say 'bout that, but I know if you'd shook hands with the chap in the boat, you'd shook hands with me, and all the time that Buster Bob was playing the fool with you, he knowed it!"

And then he told them the whole story.

Years before he had learned the legend of the Haunted Lake, and knowing the danger to which he was constantly exposed, as well as the superstitious nature of the Indians, he conceived the idea of turning the remarkable myth to his own personal account. His telescope told him when a hostile party of red-skins appeared on the shores of the lake, and then, enveloped in his white sheet and ghostly costume, Lige seated himself in his white canoe, placed a white bundle at his feet, and solemnly paddled the length of the lake.

There can be no doubt that by means of this rather ingenious contrivance, Lige preserved the light-house and his own life from destruction much longer than otherwise would have been the case.

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